



Bertrand Russell and China During and After His Visit in 1920

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Bertrand Russell and China during and after His Visit in 1920

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A Thesis in the Field of History

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Abstract

Bertrand Russell visited China in late 1920 to teach philosophy at Peking University. He expected his sabbatical to relieve his stressful experience of the First World War. Instead, he entered China in the midst of what is now called the May Fourth Movement, a groundbreaking period in which a “New Culture” was being constructed in response to China’s persistent international weakness. Many Chinese looked to Russell for answers on its social reconstruction, and in view of this fact his visit is often dismissed as having had no impact. But this misreads Russell’s own intentions for his trip, while also ignoring the several years he spent advocating for China in Britain after he returned. This thesis provides a full history of Bertrand Russell’s connection to China in the years 1920–27. Using Chinese language sources, it reconstructs his time in China from October 1920 to July 1921. This story, much of it focusing on Chinese responses to Russell, provides another angle from which to view the May Fourth period—the experiences of a sympathetic Western philosopher hailed as a “Second Confucius” upon arrival. It then turns to Russell’s impact on the British side of the relationship. At his welcome banquet in Shanghai on October 14, 1920, Bertrand Russell balked at his host’s request for advice on how to “fix” China, instead responding “how could I presume to lecture China on its reconstruction? China is not alone in this need; Europe too needs reconstruction. It is through the reformation of Europe that I hope to play a role in assisting the Chinese people!” This thesis finds that when Russell’s visit is viewed in this light, his indirect impact on China was more significant and lasting.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

In 1969 the historian Jonathan Spence published *To Change China*, a book in which he described, via a series of vignettes, the 300-year history of Westerners who visited China with the intention of transforming it according to a predefined plan.¹ Whether writing about the Jesuit Ferdinand Verbiest from the 17th century or the Bolshevik Mikhail Borodin and American General Joseph Stilwell from the 20th, these visitors “were sure that their own civilization, whatever its shortcomings, had given them something valid to offer, something that China lacked.” In each case, the visitor either left disappointed or was “changed” by China instead.

Two high-profile visitors to China, John Dewey and Bertrand Russell, are not mentioned in Spence’s book. This was no oversight, despite their superficially appearing to be prime candidates for inclusion. As two of the leading philosophers of their era, Dewey and Russell traveled separately to China soon after the First World War to teach philosophy at Peking University. As the chief proponents of their respective thought systems, Dewey of Pragmatism and Russell of Logical Analysis, each must have gone with some intention of making new converts in the classroom. Each is now generally viewed as leaving China, in the words of John King Fairbank, having produced “only superficial” results.²

1 Jonathan Spence, *To Change China: Western Advisers in China 1620-1960* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1969). This was reprinted in 1980 by Penguin Books.

2 John King Fairbank, *The Great Chinese Revolution, 1800-1985* (New York: Harper Collins, 1986), 201. Fairbank’s conclusion was of Dewey’s visit, but he would have applied it to Russell as well.

However, for Bertrand Russell, the circumstances around his choosing to go to China, his expectations for his visit, and his feelings upon his return break sharply with the pattern described by Spence.³ Russell arrived at the invitation of his Chinese hosts in the midst of what is now called the May Fourth Movement, a period that saw an influential cohort of Chinese reformers look to the West for inspiration on how to change China. In the words of Liang Qichao in November 1920, “China’s cultural movement has until now emphasized an absolute, unrestricted importation” of foreign ideas, “we open our doors wide and welcome all modern ideas of value.”⁴ As for Russell’s objectives for going: “I was invited to lecture on philosophy in the University of Peking, and I came prepared with purely academic lectures on psychology and the principles of physics.”⁵ When he learned his audience instead wanted him to propose solutions for “fixing” China, he adapted out of a desire to satisfy while also determining it best to avoid to the extent possible making comments on China’s internal affairs, about which he openly admitted his own ignorance. He left China neither disappointed nor fundamentally changed in his basic views, but re-energized to continue beyond the First World War to challenge the Great Powers through his public activities, now bolstered by his firsthand

3 The same can be said to a large extent for Dewey as well, though his visit to China is not the focus of this thesis. For book-length studies of Dewey in China, see Barry Keenan, *The Dewey Experiment in China: Educational Reform and Political Power in the Early Republic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977). Jessica Ching-Sze Wang, *John Dewey in China: To Teach and to Learn* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007).

4 “Jiangxueshe huanying luosu zhi shenghui 讲学社欢迎罗素之盛会,” *Chenbao* 《晨报》1920年11月10日. Liang was actually likely directing his comments in part towards Hu Shi, who was unhappy with Russell stealing any of the spotlight from John Dewey, and also to the students of Peking University who were becoming increasingly enamored of Bolshevism. In other words, it was a warning not to become too focused on one Western model to the exclusion of all others, but this simply supports the point being made here.

5 Bertrand Russell, “To the Editor of ‘Shanghai Life’,” *Shanghai Life*, December 21, 1920. His ‘psychology’ lectures focused on philosophy of Mind. Russell was also intensely interested in Einstein’s Relativity Theory (his ‘physics’ lectures) in large part for its philosophical implications.

knowledge of one of its “victims.” It was an experience he cherished for the rest of his life.

This is not the view of Russell’s trip to China taken by the only major full-length study in English. In a long paper published in 1982, Suzanne P. Ogden writes that Russell came to China “motivated partly by a desire to exert influence over a vast and fluid nation,” and already having “many preconceptions of what the best solutions would be.” While this may have been one of Russell’s subconscious desires—it is not clear what sources this conclusion is based on—Ogden depicts Russell as descending from this starting point down the well-trodden rabbit hole of trying to change China. She endorses the later well-known caricature of Russell, as someone eager to dogmatically propose his solution to any and every problem, as “the perfect description of Russell’s behavior in China ... [it] was a bit much.” She does not believe Russell, as a mathematician and technical philosopher, was qualified to speak on social issues at all, and completely ignores Russell’s repeatedly professed desire not to do so in the case of China after his initial praise of traditional Chinese culture met with hostility. The picture we are left with is that of a bumbling professor always trying to keep one step ahead of the new information being presented to him, for the sole purpose of sustaining his own massive ego in the face of a reactive Chinese audience that saw right through him.⁶

This thesis disagrees fundamentally with Ogden’s portrayal of Russell in China. Further discussion is left to Chapter 3, but there are three basic reasons why a new attempt at a full history should be made. First is the fact that Ogden’s paper does not

6 Suzanne P. Ogden, “The Sage in the Inkpot: Bertrand Russell and China’s Social Reconstruction in the 1920s,” *Modern Asian Studies* 16, no. 4 (1982): 529-600. The tone of Ogden’s paper towards Bertrand Russell borders on contempt. It also relies heavily on a psychological analysis of Russell that runs counter to his private letters and Chinese reports. The intensity with which Russell’s Chinese interlocutors sought to drag advice out of him (mostly against his will) is also missing, making the encounter appear far more one-sided than it actually was.

actually attempt to give a linear history of Russell in China, but rather is an extended political discussion told in a highly nonlinear way. Most of the historical information provided in Chapter 3 of this thesis does not appear in Ogden's paper. This makes it difficult to evaluate *prima facie* the appropriateness of many of the conclusions that she draws, some of which are quite jarring in light of the linear history told in Chapter 3. Second is the fact that many more Chinese language primary sources appear to be readily available now than were accessible in 1982, while important English language primary sources are also available that Ogden did not use, thanks in large part to the work emanating from the Bertrand Russell Archives at McMaster University since 1982 and the digitization of sources in online databases. Finally, the full story of Russell's connection to China in the early 1920s cannot be told by focusing exclusively on his discussions of socialism while in China; Russell experienced much more in China not within the scope of Ogden's paper that helps shed light on the May Fourth period. Furthermore, when he returned to Great Britain he engaged in several years of often intense public advocacy for China that Ogden does not attempt to cover. With Britain then viewed as the primary imperialist power in East Asia, Bertrand Russell, as one of Britain's preeminent public intellectuals, had a strong position to indirectly impact events in China by helping to shape British public opinion. This thesis represents the first attempt to tell that British side of the story in full.

To be sure, a few other English language journal articles have been written by Chinese working in the West who are not as categorically negative as Ogden in their more limited assessments.⁷ But no book-length study exists for Russell in English, in

⁷ For example, Yu Dong argues that while revolutionary ideas in China were not stimulated by Russell, many of the ideas he promoted in China are of great value for guiding the China of 1992, and presumably still today. See Yu Dong, "Russell on Chinese Civilization," *Journal of the Bertrand Russell*

contrast to the two books that have been written about Dewey's experience in China.⁸ This is not for lack of material or interest; additional book-length investigations have appeared in the Chinese language literature, augmented by many other research articles. In the first instance, it was a dissatisfaction with Ogden's analysis that inspired Feng Chongyi to reevaluate Russell's visit to China in a book published in 1994 through the Harvard-Yenching Institute. In 2015 a long book published by Ding Zijiang discussed, among other topics, over 40 Chinese literary, political and philosophical figures with whom Russell's ideas fostered an "East-West dialogue."⁹ This thesis has been significantly aided by reference to both of these works, as well as by two books of collected primary source materials in Chinese published in 2004 and 2009.¹⁰

The fact that no new long study of Russell in China has been written in English since the first one published nearly 40 years ago could indicate that the historical significance of Bertrand Russell's connection to China during the May Fourth era is not

Archives, n.s. 12 (summer 1992): 22-49. Xu Yibao credits Russell with the introduction of mathematical logic to China. See Xu Yibao, "Bertrand Russell and the Introduction of Mathematical Logic in China," *History and Philosophy of Logic* 24, (2003): 181-196. Xu Xiaoqun writes at length on Russell's reception as presented in the pages of *Chenbao*. See Xu Xiaoqun, "Cosmopolitanism, Nationalism, and Transnational Networks: The *Chenbao Fuzhan*, 1921-1928," *The China Review* 4, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 145-173. Danian Hu also devotes significant space in his book to discuss Russell as the direct cause for a widespread interest in Einstein's Relativity Theory. See Danian Hu, *China and Albert Einstein: The Reception of the Physicist and his Theory in China, 1917-1979* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).

8 Keenan, *The Dewey Experiment in China*. Wang, *John Dewey in China*.

9 Feng Chongyi 冯崇义, *Luosu yu zhongguo: xifang sixiang zai zongguo de yi ci jingli* 罗素与中国：西方思想在中国的一次经历 [*Russell and China: One Experience of Western Thought in China*] (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 1994). Ding Zijiang 丁子江, *Luosu yu zhonghua wenhua: dongxifang sixiang de yichang zhijie duihua* 罗素与中华文化：东西方思想的一场直接对话 [Bertrand Russell and Chinese Culture: A Direct East-West Dialogue] (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2015).

10 These two books have no overlap. They are Cao Yuanyong, ed., 曹元勇 (编), *Tongwang ziyou zhi lu—Luosu zai zhongguo* 通往自由之路—罗素在中国 [*Towards the Road to Freedom—Russell in China*] (Nanchang: Jiangxi gaoxiao chubanshe, 2009), and Yuan Gang, Sun Jiexiang and Ren Bingqiang, eds. 袁刚, 孙家祥, 任丙强 (编), *Zhongguo dao ziyou zhi lu—Luosu zai hua jiangyan ji* 中国到自由之路—罗素在华讲演集 [*China's Road to Freedom—Russell's Collected Lectures in China*] (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2004). The second book, in addition to Russell's complete Peking University lectures, contains news reports of his other lectures and speeches while in China.

worth re-investigation. Why is the story of Russell's visit to China and his subsequent activities in Britain important for our understanding of China and the Great Powers in the early 20th century? How is it relevant today? Aside from the general observation that its importance is increasingly being recognized within the Chinese language literature, one important reason is that the China, Europe, USA and Japan of the 1920s that Russell wrote about were all very different from what they are today a century later. Since Russell often brutally condemned Britain and the West while praising China between 1920 and 1927, most notably in *The Problem of China* (1922), a book that was reissued in Chinese translation in 2019, it is important to understand what exactly it was about these two sides that made him respond in this way. With the 100th anniversary of May 4, 1919 having recently passed and the centennial of Russell's visit now arriving, it is necessary to provide the historical context behind his still-powerful and, among many in China today, still resonant words.

This thesis is organized as follows. In the remainder of this chapter I provide a brief background on Bertrand Russell and his perceptions of China during his first 42 years. Chapter 2 describes Russell's growing attraction to traditional Chinese civilization in contrast with an industrialized Europe then plunged in the First World War. This chapter also provides a brief overview of China's May Fourth Movement and the growing attraction Russell's writings had to its young reformers. Chapter 3 focuses on Russell's visit to China, discussing his experience and reactions, as well as two extended discussions of his impact, the first on the crisis of socialism that his Changsha lectures inadvertently helped set off among Chinese intellectuals, and the second covering events in the aftermath of his visit. Chapter 4 then returns to Britain to discuss Russell's activities on China's behalf in shaping public opinion through the British Press and his

interaction (usually antagonistic) with the British government between 1921 and 1927. The final chapter briefly discusses Russell's connection to China in subsequent years and makes a concluding assessment.

Chapters 3 and 4 constitute what is intended to be the main contribution of this thesis. Chapter 3 provides the first complete history in English dedicated exclusively to Bertrand Russell's time in China and is heavily dependent on Chinese sources. Chapter 4 is the first attempt to write a detailed history of Russell's activities on China's behalf in Britain after returning from his trip. The chapter covers 1921-27, and thus can be viewed as an extension to and partial expansion of Tom Buchanan's more general history *East Wind: China and the British Left, 1925-1976*.¹¹

Bertrand Russell and His Perception of China prior to 1914

Prior to the First World War, Bertrand Russell's exposure to China's current affairs, culture and history was limited. Born in 1872, his parents died of illness before his fourth birthday and he was raised by his grandmother, wife of Lord John Russell, one of the central figures in mid-19th century British politics. He would recall late in life how "when I was a small boy, a party of Chinese in beautiful robes and pigtailed had come to see my grandfather at Pembroke Lodge and stirred my curiosity and interest,"¹² but this encounter would prove a rare exception. Instead, his educational interests would primarily focus on mathematics and philosophy, but was also rounded to include the great Western writers such as Shakespeare and Gibbon. He graduated from Cambridge University with a degree in mathematics in 1893 and in 1899 was appointed as lecturer of

11 Tom Buchanan, *East Wind: China and the British Left, 1925-1976* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

12 Bertrand Russell, *Unarmed Victory* (New York: Penguin Books, 1963), 71.

Philosophy at Cambridge. In this period, he devoted his energy primarily to the foundations of mathematics. By 1914, his reputation as an intellectual largely rested on his efforts to unite mathematics with philosophy using formal logic. In the academic world this is represented by his book *The Principles of Mathematics* (1903), his paper “On Denoting” (1905), and his monumental *Principia Mathematica* (1910-13), the last written with his Cambridge University colleague Alfred North Whitehead. He also ventured into writing for the general educated public; his book *The Problems of Philosophy* (1912) was an introduction to the abstract problems that preoccupied him during this period, and is still widely available in print.

Russell’s accomplishments in mathematics and philosophy would help legitimize him with the public during his political activism in the First World War, but until early in the first decade of the 1900s his energy was almost exclusively devoted to esoteric questions of technical philosophy. For example, his study of Georg Cantor’s theory of infinite numbers led to his preoccupation with logical contradictions. He illustrated this in his autobiography through the example of a piece of paper on which is written “the statement on the other side of this paper is false,” while on the reverse is written “the statement on the other side of this paper is true.” Many years later Russell would admit, with a short and revealing defense, that “it seemed unworthy of a grown man to spend his time on such trivialities, but what was I to do?”¹³ Yet his true thinking at the turn of the century is probably better reflected in his assertion that Cantor’s “solution of the difficulties which formerly surrounded the mathematical infinite is probably the greatest achievement of which our own age has to boast.”¹⁴ Such observations are important here

13 Bertrand Russell, *Autobiography* (London: Routledge, 2009), 138.

14 Bertrand Russell, *Mysticism and Logic, and Other Essays* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1918), 64. Quote from the essay “The Study of Mathematics,” originally written in 1902 and published in the *New*

in part because interest in these types of theoretical problems, which persisted in varying degrees throughout his life, led to Russell's successful and personally fulfilling visiting lectures at Harvard in 1914, which he published in the book *Our Knowledge of the External World* (1914), and he was under the impression that Peking University was inviting him for a similar experience in 1920.

Russell's gradual emergence from the abstract world of mathematics and philosophy began in 1901 when he witnessed a particularly intense bout of physical suffering by the wife of Alfred Whitehead, who was experiencing severe heart issues at the time. According to a shocked Russell, he suddenly recognized his past "flippant cleverness" regarding the deeper issues of human life and, "having been an Imperialist, I became during those five minutes a pro-Boer and a Pacifist."¹⁵ It was an epiphany similar in spirit to George Orwell's later story "A Hanging" (1931), in which the narrator witnesses a criminal in Burma who, despite being led to his own execution, still instinctively avoids stepping in a puddle. Russell gave expression to his new thinking in the deeply personal essay "The Free Man's Worship" (1903), in which he rejected the blind worship of Power in all its forms and declared his thought liberated: "In action, in desire, we must submit perpetually to the tyranny of outside forces; but in thought, in aspiration, we are free."¹⁶ He was also soon associating with an increasingly wide intellectual milieu and becoming politically active in support of the Liberal Party.

Initially, this expanded scope of Russell's interests only slightly touched on the Far East, and then only in regard to the general sense of justice and distaste for British

Quarterly in November 1907.

15 Russell, *Autobiography*, 137.

16 Bertrand Russell, *Philosophical Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1910), 63.

imperialism that he was developing. This is reflected in his personal correspondence. In February 1905 he wrote to his friend Lucy Donnelly about a small private dinner at the home of Sidney and Beatrice Webb, two friends and prominent leaders of the British Left, which included conservative Prime Minister Arthur Balfour and Julius Wernher among the guests. Regarding Wernher, one of Britain's wealthiest businessmen with vast interests in South Africa, he sarcastically observed that he bore "very lightly the load of blood, of nations destroyed & hatreds generated, of Chinese slavery & English corruption" and took note, in response to a humorous question posed by Mrs. Webb, that Wernher ultimately arrived last after Balfour, "for tho Balfour governs the Empire, Wernher governs Balfour."¹⁷ The "Chinese slavery" that Russell referred to was the British use of indentured Chinese labor in the gold mines of the Transvaal. It would become an explosive election issue later that year because of its strong overtones of slavery—indeed it would be explicitly referred to as "slavery" by the Liberal Party during their campaign.¹⁸ In November, after the renewal of the Anglo-Japanese alliance, he again wrote Lucy that "the Japanese alliance seems to me excellent—I am glad England should be ready to recognize the yellow man as a civilized being."¹⁹ And in the following January 1906, he wrote, following the Liberal Party's success at the general election, that "the Liberals have done wisely, as well as rightly, in stopping the S. African Slave Trade in Chinamen."²⁰

17 Maria Forte, ed., "Bertrand Russell's Letters to Helen Thomas Flexner and Lucy Martin Donnelly" (PhD dissertation: McMaster University, 1988), 68-69.

18 Kevin Grant, *A Civilised Savagery: Britain and the New Slaveries in Africa, 1884-1926* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 79-106.

19 Forte, "Russell's Letters to Flexner and Donnelly," 92. This military alliance was directed against Russia. It was signed in 1902 and expanded in 1905.

20 Forte, "Russell's Letters to Flexner and Donnelly," 98.

With time, Russell would begin to develop a deeper appreciation for Chinese civilization, but his first attempts tended to scratch the surface and take Europe as a strong frame of reference. For example, in January 1910, he wrote Lucy to thank her for the present of Chinese poems translated by British sinologist Herbert Giles. Russell found the poems to be “interesting: often very artistic, with a peculiar quaint quality; the only thing that is disappointing about them is that they are not more unlike our poetry in sentiment. I am amused to find the 18th century indulging the same kind of skeptical rationalism as prevailed in Europe at that time.”²¹ Another example is seen one year later in his letter to friend Helen Flexner, where he sarcastically writes “I have been reading a delightful book about the Dow. Empress of China. China is so exactly like England: it is the only other country where government appointments are given for power of writing verses in a dead language, & where a man’s later career depends entirely on good form, & to no extent upon knowledge of his job.” He also noted that “the Boxers are almost indistinguishable from our Protectionists.”²²

On the eve of war in 1914, Russell had not yet come to see China as a place on which to devote much energy. However, in the years leading to the Great War the intellectual milieu with which he associated, today called the “Bloomsbury group,” did begin to turn its attention to Chinese art and culture.²³ The informal Bloomsbury group grew out of student friendships forged at Cambridge University in the decade following

21 Forte, “Russell’s Letters to Flexner and Donnelly,” 157. Russell is referring to Giles’ *Chinese Poetry in English Verse* (1898).

22 Forte, “Russell’s Letters to Flexner and Donnelly,” 106. Russell is referring to the book *China Under Empress Dowager* (1910) by J.O.P. Bland and Edmund Backhouse.

23 For a general background on Bloomsbury, and its interest in Chinese art, see Ira Nadel, “Oriental Bloomsbury,” *Modernist Cultures* 13.1 (2018): 14-32. Anne Witchard, ed., *British Modernism and Chinoiserie* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015). Jonathan Atkin, *A War of Individuals: Bloomsbury Attitudes to the Great War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 17-51.

Russell's own graduation. It included John Maynard Keynes, Lytton Strachey, Virginia and Leonard Woolf, Clive and Vanessa Bell, and Arthur Waley, among others. Waley would soon become the preeminent translator of Chinese (and Japanese) literature in Britain, joining the ranks of Herbert Giles, professor of Chinese at Cambridge and 44 years his senior. Giles' own collection of translated poems in which Russell expressed his interest above, though originally published in 1898, likely did not come to Russell's attention until 1909 because of the influential review written by Lytton Strachey the previous year that praised it in revelatory terms and "anticipated much of [Bloomsbury's] appreciation of Chinese writing to follow."²⁴

Older members who connected with the Bloomsbury group included G. Lowes Dickinson, Roger Fry and Ottoline Morrell, as well as Bertrand Russell. Dickinson, a historian, was Russell's colleague at Cambridge. They maintained an extensive written correspondence in the years leading up to 1914 and were lifelong friends.²⁵ Dickinson was well known for writing *Letters from John Chinaman* (1901) in the immediate aftermath of China's anti-foreign Boxer Uprising (1899-1901). The book was widely read and considered novel for its criticism of the West and its literary technique of being written from the perspective of a Chinese official—originally published anonymously, the book fooled many as being an authentic translation.²⁶ The artist and critic Roger Fry, another lifelong friend of Russell's, published several essays praising Chinese art in his *Burlington Magazine* after 1910—increasing quantities of which could be seen in the

24 Nadel, "Oriental Bloomsbury," 15.

25 Russell, *Autobiography*, 53.

26 Jason Harding, "Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson and the King's College Mandarins," *Cambridge Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (2012): 26-42.

museums of London.²⁷ Some in Russell's social group also started to travel to China, bringing back their firsthand accounts: Dickinson went in 1910 and 1913, and Sidney and Beatrice Webb (not of Bloomsbury, but of the socialist Fabian Society, with which Russell also associated) visited in 1911.²⁸

There is no indication that Bertrand Russell actively engaged in helping to develop this growing fascination with Chinese art and culture among his Cambridge companions, but the coming years would clearly show that their interests were rubbing off on him. Russell's attitude towards Chinese civilization quickly evolved with the First World War, when he came to condemn Europe almost wholesale and look for new ways of reconstructing European society after what he assumed would be its complete destruction.

27 Ralph Parfett, "Roger Fry, Chinese Art and *The Burlington Magazine*," In Anne Witchard, ed., *British Modernism and Chinoiserie* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 53-71.

28 In Beatrice Webb's case, she did not like China because she found it dirty and the men too effeminate. Russell is not recorded as having had any immediate response, but after his return from China in 1921 he challenged her about her views at a dinner party. Kingsley Martin recalls, "After his return to England I was present when he had a fierce argument with Beatrice Webb, who, according to him, loved Japan and hated China because there were no lavatories at the railway stations in China and because the Japanese bought the Webbs' books." See Kingsley Martin, "Russell: Three More Decades," *New Statesman*, April 26, 1968. Xu Zhimo, who associated closely with Bloomsbury and may have also been at this dinner, similarly writes how Russell challenged Webb by praising Young China. See Xu Zhimo 徐志摩: "Luntan Luosu yu Zhongguo du Luosu zhu Zhongguo Wenti 论坛罗素与中国读罗素著 '中国问题'", *Chenbao Fukan* 《晨报副刊》1922年12月3日.

Chapter 2

Bertrand Russell, China and the Trauma of the First World War

The First World War would be a transformative event for Bertrand Russell. It marked the break in his life between his “private years” (1872-1914), where he was a professional mathematician and philosopher working as a lecturer at Cambridge University, and his “public years” (1915-1970), where he was known worldwide as a popular writer on social issues and current affairs. The war years also marked a cultural break with the past for China, which followed the political break with its imperial system in 1912. In 1915 a new period referred to by some as a “Chinese enlightenment” would begin to emerge, culminating in the Tiananmen protests of May 4, 1919.²⁹ This period would also see both sides begin to look to the other for insights; the Chinese would look to Russell’s writings on political and social philosophy in the course of its new awakening, while Russell would look to China for a new perspective on civilized society after the failures of industrial Europe demonstrated by the war.

Bertrand Russell’s Antiwar Activities and China-gazing during WWI

Russell’s disillusionment with Europe after the start of the war can be attributed as much to its people as its political leaders. He was shocked to find that, as he became

²⁹ Vera Schwarcz, *The Chinese Enlightenment: Intellectuals and the Legacy of the May Fourth Movement of 1919* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986). This change had an even longer development reaching back to the ‘self-strengthening’ period. John Dewey’s cautious remarks in the aftermath of May 4, 1919 are useful to keep in mind when discussing China’s ‘enlightenment’: “I find in reading books that the Awakening of China has been announced a dozen or more times by foreign travelers in the last ten years, so I hesitate to announce it again.” See Nicholas Clifford, *“A Truthful Impression of the Country”*: *British and American Travel Writing in China, 1880-1949* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001), 89.

more opposed to the war, many of his initially sympathetic friends and associates were swept away by war fever following Britain's entry. In 1915, Russell would cancel his membership to the Liberal Party over what he saw as its wartime collaboration with the Conservative government, be dismissed from his lectureship at Cambridge University for his antiwar agitation, and put his effort full-time into antiwar work as a prominent member of the newly-formed Union of Democratic Control (UDC). This antiwar organization consisted of several M.P.'s from Britain's Labour Party and other friends of Russell's, and continued into the 1920s as one means for bringing pressure on the British government, often in response to its China policy. Still, despite now being Party-less, in 1915 Russell could not bring himself to join his fellow UDC members enrolled in the Independent Labour Party (ILP), the left-wing organization affiliated with the Labour Party, because, although he agreed "most warmly with the attitude which the ILP has taken up about the war ... *I am not a socialist*, though I think I might call myself a syndicalist."³⁰ At least initially, Russell's main political goals were solely to turn British public opinion against the war, particularly through his efforts writing for the No-Conscription Fellowship.

Russell's antiwar activism was an all-consuming undertaking, interspersed with occasional failed attempts to turn his back on it as futile and return to contemplative thought. It brought him widespread attention, both in admiration and loathing, as well as a large intelligence file within the British government, which closely followed his activities and impeded them when legally possible.³¹ For Russell it was clearly one of the most intense periods of his life, not only in its emotional toll, but even in the rejuvenation

30 Ronald Clark, *The Life of Bertrand Russell* (New York: Knopf, 1976), 257. (italics added)

31 Atkin, *A War of Individuals*, 52-76.

he recalls feeling “with a new kind of activity, for which I did not feel the staleness that beset me whenever I tried to return to mathematical logic.”³² From 1914-18, China served as an occasionally comforting, distant land to which he could mentally escape this stress. One impetus for this was his friend Lucy Donnelly’s trip in 1916, and their correspondence helps illustrate the progress of his idealization of China. In July 1915 he wrote of his excitement at Lucy’s travel plans, saying “I should love to go to China. Have you read the works of Lao Tze & Chuang Tze? They delighted me; especially the story of the augur & the pigs.”³³ Three months later he would cynically write Lucy “so you are off to Japan & China—it is well to make friends with our future masters. When Europe has exterminated itself, no doubt the Chinese will find it convenient. I like their philosophy & poetry & art; I could do with them very well. The only thing I know against them is their belief in filial piety.” Echoing past Mandarin officials, a fact he would soon appreciate, he continued that “I have retired to the country ... where I can write undisturbed. I have finished writing on the war.”³⁴

One year later in November 1916, Russell was back at his antiwar activities and writing to Lucy in Beijing how “it is a comfort to me that you admire China—all I know of it fascinates me.” He also noted, regarding Europe’s self-destruction, that “America has become very important since it has become clear that it & China must carry on the

32 Russell, *Autobiography*, 225.

33 Forte, “Russell’s Letters to Flexner and Donnelly,” 248. Russell likely read this in Giles’ *Chuang Tzu: Mystic, Moralist and Social Reformer* (1889). The story is of a Chinese official/auger who attempts to comfort pigs that will be slaughtered in a ritual by telling them how wonderful a service they are providing to the state. But the pigs prefer life over honors that mean nothing to them. Russell’s connection of the pigs with soldiers in the war and the auger with European politicians and domestic war supporters is obvious.

34 Forte, “Russell’s Letters to Flexner and Donnelly,” 251. The “convenience” Russell thinks China would have felt would stem from the exit of European countries from Chinese territory. Russell had yet to develop an understanding of Japan to see that it would in fact be Japan that would find this exit convenient vis-a-vis China.

world's civilization in [the] future. I wonder which will contribute most."³⁵ While it is tempting to read this in the context of the present day, in fact Russell's later writings show that he almost certainly intended here to pit America's global finance and industrial capitalism against a possible postwar resurgence of what he saw as the slower pace of a traditional, unindustrialized—but highly civilized—China. He reiterated his fascination with China and a potential trip there the following March of 1917, writing to Lucy that "I should love China. Chinese pictures are the only ones I genuinely like. I enjoy Chinese verse as far as one can in translation, & I delight in the philosophy of Chuang Tzu." Russell's still-fresh entry into Chinese civilization was through its traditional culture, and, in contrast to contemporary Europe, everything he found there was reassuring. Likely unaware of China's "New Culture" movement that was then sprouting, he bemusedly recalled a Chinese student "who wrote asking me the meaning of existence, & enclosed a stamped envelope for reply by return. He had been infected by Western hustle. I replied, giving all the required information." Russell then exhaled, in a manner occasionally seen in his letters, "I am fearfully busy, which is the only way to keep sane. I spend my leisure, such as it is, meditating on Life & Death, human nature, & what people value. I feel an exile in this planet. *I think I must go to the East.*" What he thought he would find in the East naturally isn't stated explicitly, but perhaps can be inferred two sentences later: "When the war is over I shall vanish from the world & devote my time to solitary contemplation. There are still mathematics, & the stars, & the wind at night."³⁶

Russell's antiwar writings ultimately landed him with a 6-month jail sentence in May 1918 for "insulting an ally." He had again returned to activism from a break to write

35 Forte, "Russell's Letters to Flexner and Donnelly," 256.

36 Forte, "Russell's Letters to Flexner and Donnelly," 258-259. (italics added)

an article in which he suggested that the soon-to-arrive American soldiers would be used to suppress British and French strikers, as they were accustomed to do at home. The comment was written with an attitude that would become commonplace in Russell's writings on current affairs (referred to once in his correspondence as a "whisk of his tail"), especially his writings on China viz. the Great Powers, of stretching the kernel of a truth to its extremity in order to provoke a response. The now Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour interceded on Russell's behalf to provide him with better cell conditions and access to books and writing materials during his confinement. Thus, he could write his popular classic *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy* (1918). He was also able to receive from Arthur Waley his collection of translations *A Hundred and Seventy Chinese Poems* (1918), from which Russell occasionally copied selections into his letters written from his jail cell and which he apparently carried out with him from prison.³⁷ One poem, "The Red Cockatoo" by an anonymous Chinese writer of the 1st century B.C., was so memorable that he reproduced it in his autobiography decades later.³⁸

Bertrand Russell's increasing attraction to Chinese culture reflects the general intellectual trend in Britain that began with his Bloomsbury associates, and his close friendship with this group ensured he was up-to-date about their doings. We see that Russell was on Arthur Waley's list to personally receive his important new collection of translations in 1918, which itself was written partly in response to the collection of more loosely translated Chinese poems *Cathay* (1915) by Ezra Pound that created a sensation

37 *The Brixton Letters of Bertrand Russell*, <https://russell-letters.mcmaster.ca/brixton-letter-78>, note 26. For example, see letters 76, 78, 80, 86 in this digital collection of the Brixton Letters, Brixton being the name of Russell's jail.

38 Russell, *Autobiography*, 243. The poem reads: Sent as a present from Annam/ A red cockatoo./ Coloured like the peach-tree blossom./ Speaking with the speech of men./ And they did to it what is always done/ To the learned and eloquent./ They took a cage with stout bars/ And shut it up inside.

in Britain upon publication. Another major book of the period, *Eminent Victorians* (1918) by Lytton Strachey, contained four iconoclastic biographies of till-then highly respected 19th century British figures, including one of Charles “Chinese” Gordon that Russell read with delight while in prison.

This wartime shift in how many Britons viewed their own Victorian age was directly connected to the shift in perceptions of China, as reflected by Nicholas Clifford in his description of the tone change in travel writings. China was starting to be written of less as a place to be transformed; instead, “there was now less certainty of Western superiority, either racial or institutional [because of the war].... To a remarkable extent China had become now simply a nation to be taken on its own terms and indeed even a nation from which the West might have something to learn.”³⁹ This willingness to take China on its own terms—and the assumption that those terms were defined by traditional Chinese culture—in combination with an increasing appreciation among Russell’s friends for Chinese art and literature, are clearly reflected in Russell’s first speeches in China as we will see. During the wartime period, this new attitude in Britain can also be sensed in his three books on politics and society.

Principles of Social Reconstruction, Political Ideals, Roads to Freedom

During the war Russell ventured for the first time into publishing his rapidly evolving social and political philosophy. These works were *Principles of Social Reconstruction* (1916), *Political Ideals* (1917) and *Roads to Freedom* (1918). In addition to being best-sellers in Britain and America during the war, in 1919-20 they would also be translated and widely read in China, laying the foundation for many Chinese

³⁹ Clifford, *Truthful Impression*, 74.

intellectuals' perceptions of Russell. Therefore, although China does not factor significantly into these three works, it is worth briefly summarizing the relevant contents that illustrate what ideas many Chinese were eagerly expecting Russell to promote during his visit.

Principles of Social Reconstruction is premised on the belief that impulse dominates over conscious reasoning as the major force driving the development of human society.⁴⁰ Impulse differs from desire in that impulses are what instinctively push one towards an end, which is the desire. These impulses can be divided into those that are *possessive* and those that are *creative*. Russell views the possessive impulses as primarily bad, leading to violence and war in their extreme, and the creative impulses as good, ultimately producing a civilization's art, science and high culture. But it is important to recognize that these two dominant impulses are a fact of nature and neither should be artificially suppressed, but rather channeled into appropriate outlets. The Daoist philosophy of Zhuangzi (Chuang Tze), though not explicitly mentioned in this book, is closely related to Russell's thinking here and either influenced it or helps account for Russell's strong attraction to it. The war in Europe came about because possessive impulses were dominant and creative impulses suppressed, which Russell blamed on the extreme and unnatural conditions of life created by capitalism as it was then practiced. Citing William James' speech on "The Moral Equivalent of War" as inspiration, Russell called for postwar society to be reconstructed so that nonviolent outlets are available to reduce the dangers that stem from the possessive impulses, while all roadblocks that

40 Bertrand Russell, *Principles of Social Reconstruction* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1916). Alan Ryan, *Bertrand Russell: A Political Life* (London: Allen Lane, 1988), 72-75. Russell was seeking to explain how Europe could persist in inflicting so much destruction on itself when it should have been obvious to rational people on all sides that continuing the war was not worth it for anyone. For the modern classic that discusses this dichotomy from a scientific perspective, see Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011).

thwart development of creative impulses are removed. Russell reiterated and developed these ideas in the short *Political Ideals*, which consisted of lectures he was prevented from delivering in Britain and was banned from publication there, but which was widely read in America and China.⁴¹

Roads to Freedom, subtitled *Socialism, Anarchism, and Syndicalism*, continues from Russell's previous two books, which centered more on the individual, to discuss three possible political systems for postwar European reconstruction that were then popular among radicals, and suddenly seemed realizable following the Russian Revolution of the previous year.⁴² In the few years since his ambivalent letter regarding ILP membership, Russell's own political views had clearly matured. Rejecting the appeal of anarchism and syndicalism on practical grounds,⁴³ Russell is now firmly in the socialist camp, all forms of which he sees as having in common their support for democracy—in the British sense of the word—and abolition of capitalism.⁴⁴ Among socialist systems, Russell opposes State (Marxist) Socialism as giving too much economic power to the State, and tentatively considers himself a Guild Socialist, which advocates uniting the independent trade organizations supported by syndicalists through a federal government system. Unlike Marxist Socialism, Russell saw Guild Socialism as preserving the high level of individual liberty that he advocated for throughout his life.⁴⁵

41 For the American version, see Bertrand Russell, *Political Ideals* (New York: The Century Company, 1917).

42 Bertrand Russell, *Roads to Freedom: Socialism, Anarchism, and Syndicalism* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1918).

43 The difference apparently being whether the individual or trade union is taken as the unrestrained unit.

44 Russell, *Roads to Freedom*, 24.

45 Russell, *Roads to Freedom*, 13.

These various economic and political ideas would receive a wide audience in China during the May Fourth period, with Russell presented as one of its standard-bearers.

Of particular note in the 1918 edition, but removed from the American edition published in 1919 as *Proposed Roads to Freedom*, is a quote on the title page from Laozi: “Production without possession, action without self-assertion, development without domination” (生而不有，为而不恃，长而不宰). In both editions Russell also reproduces a complete story from the “anarchist” Zhuangzi on Po Lo’s management of horses, which Po Lo did so skillfully that only half died as a result of his training, nevermind the fact that effectively all survived and thrived when left free.⁴⁶ Both references had little significance for the reception of the book in China, but does further indicate the increasing appeal Daoism had for Russell, since these ideas are very much of the spirit in which Russell’s three books were written. To a friend, Russell would write from prison several months later that “I remember your objecting to my praise of the Chinese doctrine of Tao because it seemed to you too passive. But in actual fact it comes very near the truth. The child will grow and develop by the process of nature, and what you can do (beyond material care) is almost wholly confined to *example*.”⁴⁷

China’s Intellectual Awakening and Introduction to Bertrand Russell

In the year following Bertrand Russell’s jail sentence and final major wartime writings, China would experience an epoch-defining public protest on May 4, 1919 in Tiananmen Square, Beijing. The spark that set off this protest was foreknowledge that the

46 For Zhuangzi’s story of Po Lo, Russell cites Lionel Giles, *Musings of a Chinese Mystic: Selections from the Philosophy of Chuang Tzu* (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1906). See Russell, *Roads to Freedom*, 50-51.

47 *The Brixton Letters of Bertrand Russell*, <https://russell-letters.mcmaster.ca/brixton-letter-57>. Emphasis in original.

Treaty of Versailles, which formally ended the First World War, would hand over German-controlled territory in Shandong province—China’s heartland—to Japan. This was done despite the fact that China too was technically among the victors of the war, contributing nearly 140,000 Chinese laborers since 1917 to work behind the lines on the Western Front. It was the final straw in a series of national humiliations that brought the students of Peking University out into the streets. There, they expressed their frustration with the Beijing government that represented all of China internationally and urged their representatives in Paris to more forcefully assert China’s rights. After events turned confrontational and some students were arrested, the students’ support base grew rapidly throughout China. Public support for the “*Beida* (北大)” students made Peking University (北京大学) a standard-bearer for the revolutionary spirit across China in subsequent years. Under the guidance of a sympathetic faculty and administration, *Beida* served as the epicenter of a new “Chinese awakening.”

One reason that the response on May 4th was so potent and lasting was that the anticipation for a positive result at Versailles had reached a crescendo during what has been called the “Wilsonian Moment.”⁴⁸ In his Fourteen Points speech of January 1918 that defined America’s objectives for a postwar settlement, President Woodrow Wilson called on Europe to make “a free, open-minded, and absolutely impartial adjustment of all colonial claims” with equal weight given to “the interests of the populations concerned” when it came time to determining questions of sovereignty. The next month Wilson would again emphasize this demand in his Address to Congress, saying that “‘self-determination’ is not a mere phrase. It is an imperative principle of action which

48 Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 99-117, 177-196.

statesmen will henceforth ignore at their peril.” The expectations this inspired in China brought an intense focus on how the Great Powers would resolve China’s postwar issues at Versailles. However, Wilson ultimately chose to sacrifice the self-determination of territories outside of Europe in order to obtain British and French support for his League of Nations. When he also chose not to oppose Japanese demands in China in order to obtain their compliance, pressure on the Chinese delegation to reject these terms gave them no choice but to walk out of the conference without signing the treaty.

However, the protest on May 4, 1919 had important precursors, with two critical ones as early as 1915. The first was Japan’s Twenty-one Demands, secretly delivered to Yuan Shikai’s Beijing government; if fully agreed to, they would have effectively made China a colony of the Japanese Empire. When word of Japanese demands leaked to the public, they generated a broad public backlash which brought an intense focus on how Yuan’s government would respond, as well as a boycott of Japanese goods. The former would show the power of public opinion as a constraint on government action, while the latter demonstrated the considerable power the boycott could have as a political tool. The second precursor was the establishment of the journal *Xin Qingnian* (新青年), or *New Youth* by Chen Duxiu (陈独秀). Inspiring many other successful publications that would quickly follow in its wake, *Xin Qingnian* became the preeminent avenue for publishing forward-looking political and cultural writings in the new “common language” style, or *baihua* (白话), rather than the complicated written language that had persisted for centuries and had a far narrower readership.

The “May Fourth Movement,” as it is called today, refers to both this gestation period and its aftermath. Precise dates are difficult to give, but Tse-tsung Chow, whose

The May Fourth Movement (1960) set the foundation for study of this period, defines the May Fourth Movement as roughly spanning from 1917 to 1921.⁴⁹ This begins with the sudden, rapid growth of the “New Culture” movement in Chinese society when the seeds planted by *Xin Qingnian* in 1915 took root at Peking University under the new leadership of university president Cai Yuanpei (蔡元培) and dean Chen Duxiu. It ends with the shift in popular emphasis to political action rather than the production of “New Literature” and “New Thought” along progressive social and political lines. One aim of the next chapter will be to show that Bertrand Russell, who left China in July 1921, was one of several important figures in bringing about this transition, although his would be an entirely passive role.

The May Fourth participants shared a desire to fundamentally change China along non-traditional lines, and in this they differed profoundly from the Confucian literati who still had some fight left in them. But they did not constitute a monolith; within the movement there was a wide diversity of opinions that were often in strong disagreement. Hu Shi (胡适), the leader of the New Literature movement, believed that focus should lie on developing the *baihua* literary form in order to create new mental landscapes that could inspire subsequent generations, which he thought would be better positioned than his own to implement political change. The fiction of Lu Xun (鲁迅) represents the supreme example of this approach. Hu famously called for “more study of problems, less

49 Tse-tsung Chow, *The May Fourth Movement: Intellectual Revolution in Modern China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960), 1. For other discussions of this period, see Schwarcz, *The Chinese Enlightenment*. Zhang Yongjin, *China in the International System, 1918–20: The Middle Kingdom at the Periphery* (London: Macmillan, 1991). Edward Q. Wang, *Inventing China through History: The May Fourth Approach to Historiography* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001). Merle Goldman and Leo Ou-Fan Lee, eds., *An Intellectual History of Modern China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). Rana Mitter, *A Bitter Revolution: China's Struggle with the Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). Peter Zarrow, *After Empire: The Conceptual Transformation of the Chinese State, 1885-1924*. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012). Timothy Cheek, *The Intellectual in Modern Chinese History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

talk of ‘isms’,” and led one faction of this intellectual split. He saw the May Fourth generation’s role as nothing less than to “re-create civilization” through focus on Chinese life and society, and not to engage in creed wars that could have no practical effect. In this he was influenced by the philosophy of pragmatism promoted by John Dewey, Hu’s mentor during his PhD studies at Columbia University. Li Dazhao (李大钊), the father of Communism in China, disagreed with Hu, seeing no contradiction between problems and “isms,” believing that a developed ideology was necessary before one could determine *correct* action. Chen Duxiu, whose eclectic views straddled the middle ground, would call on both “Mr. Democracy” and “Mr. Science” to combat Confucian traditionalism.⁵⁰

One unique form of action taken during the May Fourth period was to invite foreign scholars to China for long term visits, with the intention of learning from their expertise. The first important step in this direction was the invitation of John Dewey to China, who arrived on the eve of May 4, 1919 and witnessed events in Beijing firsthand. Dewey taught at Peking University for two years, completely overlapping with Bertrand Russell’s visit—in fact, both departed China aboard the same ship. While his visit is of significant interest in its own right, it is important here for the series of lectures he would deliver on “Three Contemporary Philosophers” in March 1920. Having an eye to China’s current needs, Dewey presented the thought of William James, Henri Bergson and Bertrand Russell as three diverse directions for possible study. William James had already passed away by 1920, but attention soon turned to Bergson and Russell as possible future guests at Peking University.⁵¹

50 Chow, *The May Fourth Movement*, 218-222. Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 3rd edition (New York: W. W. Norton, 2013), 286-295.

51 Russell was invited first, and serious plans were made and discussed in public print to invite Bergson the following year. A fierce opponent of what he saw as Bergson’s purely subjective approach to philosophy, Russell would criticize Bergson every time he was mentioned by the Chinese and explicitly

Just as the hiring of Cai Yuanpei and Chen Duxiu to guide the intellectual life of Peking University would accelerate the new “Chinese enlightenment,” Dewey’s lectures would amplify interest in Bertrand Russell. But this interest had also been incubating for some time. Zhang Shenfu (张申府, aka Songnian 崧年) and Zhang Dongsun (张东荪) were two prominent young intellectuals whose intense interest in Russell had already formed by early 1920. Zhang Shenfu, “China’s Russell scholar,”⁵² would write prolifically on Russell, referring to him in the March 1919 issue of *Xin Qingnian* as “the thinker I have most admired these past few years.”⁵³ His interest in Russell primarily focused on his technical philosophy, although he also wrote on his social philosophy, and he translated many of Russell’s works for Chinese readers. Zhang published an annotated bibliography in *Xin Qingnian* that would lead Chen Duxiu to refer to Russell as “the world leader of the new thought tide of rationalist philosophy.”⁵⁴ By April 1920, *Xin Qingnian* was publishing lengthy articles by other writers as well devoted entirely to Russell’s social philosophy, for example discussing his impulse theory of action described in *Principles of Social Reconstruction*.⁵⁵

Zhang Dongsun was another prominent young intellectual who would dedicate significant space to discussing Russell’s social philosophy in his own periodical *Jiefang*

advise against inviting him. This likely accounts for why an invitation to Bergson was never extended.

52 Vera Schwartz, *Time for Telling Truth is Running Out: Conversations with Zhang Shenfu* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 124-153.

53 Zhang Songnian 张崧年: “Nan nü wenti 男女问题”, *Xin Qingnian* 《新青年》第6卷 第3号, 1919年3月.

54 Zhang Songnian 张崧年: “Jingshen duli xuanyan 精神独立宣言”, *Xin Qingnian* 《新青年》第7卷 第1号, 1919年12月. Chen Duxiu 陈独秀: “Zisha lun 自杀论”, *Xin Qingnian* 《新青年》第7卷 第2号, 1920年1月.

55 Gao Yihan 高一涵: “Luosu de shehui zhexue 罗素的社会哲学”, *Xin Qingnian* 《新青年》第7卷 第5号, 1920年4月.

yu Gaizao (解放与改造, or *Emancipation and Reconstruction*). Zhang found much of value in Russell's social philosophy, particularly his impulse theory, and his interest in Russell was limited to this aspect of his thought. For example, Zhang would also connect capitalism with a dangerous overabundance of the possessive impulse in society, while in socialism (particularly Guild Socialism) he would see a system in which the creative impulse could thrive and people could live in greater harmony. Zhang also called for a spiritual revolution in China to oppose the idea that only industrialization could save the country—an opinion he would later alter to significant controversy after traveling to Changsha with Russell.⁵⁶ However, unlike many Russell admirers, Zhang Dongsun was not a proponent of Bolshevik-style communism, but was a member of a more moderate group of reformers that included Liang Qichao (梁启超). In this sense, he was the most prominent Chinese thinker whose opinions best aligned with Russell's, and who was best positioned to promote Russell's social philosophy to the Chinese.

By early 1920 interest in Russell's philosophy was already gaining traction in China, but after Dewey's lectures this interest would increase rapidly, reaching a crescendo after news broke of Russell's invitation to China. Mao Zedong, to give a representative example of one still relatively obscure May Fourth enthusiast, would write to a friend in June 1920 that he had recently begun concentrating his studies on the "three great contemporary philosophers," with the social context clear enough not to require

56 For example Zhang Dongsun 张东荪: "Luosaier de Zhengzhi Lixiang 罗塞尔的 (政治理想)", *Jiefang yu Gaizao* 《解放与改造》第1卷 第1/2其, 1919年9月. Zhang Dongsun 张东荪: "Women de wei shenme yao jiang shehui zhuyi? 我们为什么要讲社会主义?", *Jiefang yu Gaizao* 《解放与改造》第1卷 第7其, 1919年12月. The latter issue also contained a review of *Proposed Roads to Freedom* by another writer. See Soonyi Lee, "Culture and Politics in Interwar China: The Two Zhangs and Chinese Socialism" (PhD dissertation: New York University, 2014), 107-108. The other 'Zhang' in this dissertation is Zhang Junmai.

their names.⁵⁷ Articles discussing Russell's three wartime books proliferated in May Fourth periodicals. *Gaizao* (改造, not to be confused with *Jiefang yu Gaizao*) would publish "An Introduction to Russell," a long three-article series on *Political Ideals*, *Roads to Freedom* and his writings about Russia.⁵⁸ Others such as *Dongfang Zazhi* (东方杂志) and *Juewu* (觉悟) also published shorter articles to introduce and discuss Russell. But the major venue was *Xin Qingnian*, which in addition to publishing articles and translations over multiple issues, dedicated an entire issue in October 1920 to Russell with his portrait on the cover to celebrate his impending arrival.⁵⁹

The initiative to invite Bertrand Russell to China was spearheaded by Liang Qichao, who at 46 was best known and admired for his activities as a Qing-era reformer. Liang was a founding member of the *Jinbudang* (进步党) in 1913, a centrist-progressive party that also included Zhang Dongsun as a prominent member. Although it disbanded after Yuan Shikai's death in 1916, its members would remain associated with this group, and Liang with his middle of the road views. This allowed him to be an unofficial observer at Paris in 1919 without being grouped with those blamed for the loss of Shandong, and to be viewed as sympathetic to proponents of traditional Chinese culture without being condemned as a conservative reactionary by the May Fourth movement. As to his motivation for inviting Russell, according to Tse-tsung Chow, "to a certain degree,

57 Stuart R. Schram, ed., *Mao's Road to Power; Revolutionary Writings 1912-1949: Volume I The Pre-Marxist Period, 1912-1920* (London: M.E. Sharpe, 1992), 519. Schram lists Bergson, Russell and Dewey as the three philosophers in a footnote without reference to Dewey's lecture series. It seems as likely that Mao meant James and not Dewey and his use of quotation marks around this phrase indicates he was making a still-fresh 'pop culture' reference to Dewey's lectures, for which he assumed no explanation would be necessary.

58 "Luosu jieshao 罗素介绍", *Gaizao* 《改造》1920年第3卷第2期。

59 *Xin Qingnian* 《新青年》1920年10月1日,第8卷第2号。The other two figures to have dedicated issues would be Henrik Ibsen (June 1918) and Karl Marx (May 1919). Also notable is that the previous issue of *Xin Qingnian* marked their open promotion of Communism.

[Liang and his *Jinbudang* associates'] sponsorship of Russell's lectures was conducted in the hope of strengthening their ideological position."⁶⁰

After Russell's acceptance, Liang would quickly establish the Lecture Society (讲学社) as Russell's formal host, and to be a platform for inviting future guests. Liang's close associate Fu Tong (傅铜), who wrote the invitation letter to Russell, saw hosting such visitors as having "many advantages, not least of which is a chance to conduct 'people diplomacy' (国民外交)." Others among this group like Xu Xinliu (徐新六) envisioned Russell as lecturing across China, since members from each university "should seek his assistance."⁶¹ It was clear, then, that Russell's visit was viewed as having several useful functions besides teaching math and philosophy to undergrads at Peking University. Fearful of their ultimately innocuous intentions to co-opt Russell to increase the prestige of their *Jinbudang* group, Hu Shi warned Russell's assigned interpreter Zhao Yuanren (赵元任) prior to Russell's arrival that Zhao should "not to be made use of in promoting the prestige of that party for political purposes."⁶² Between Liang's group, the dread this created for Hu, and the excitement among the readers of *Xin Qingnian*, anticipation for Russell's visit was high from multiple points along the political and social spectrum. When Russell stepped off the boat at Shanghai in October 1920, China's

60 Chow, *The May Fourth Movement*, 233.

61 Quoted from Zheng Shiqu 郑师渠. "Wusi qianhou waiguo mingzhe laihua jiangxue yu zhongguo sixiang jie de biandong" 五四前后外国明哲来华讲学与中国思想界的变动 [Famous foreign scholar's lecture tours in China around the May Fourth Movement and changes in Chinese intellectual circles]. *Jindai shi yanjiu (Modern Chinese History Studies)* 近代史研究 2 (2012), 4-27, p. 6.

62 Zhao Yuanren, *Life with Chaos: The Autobiography of a Chinese Family, Vol. II* (Ithaca: Spoken Language Services, 1975), 104.

“Russellian Moment” had arrived—or to use the Chinese expression often used in retrospect today, China had “Russell fever (罗素热).”⁶³

Russell Visits Russia, and an Invitation from China

Returning briefly to 1919, Russell’s interest in China to that point had been primarily as a source of private comfort and was not a topic in his public writings. This began to change in August of that year when he published a review of T. C. Werner’s *China of the Chinese* (1919) in the *Athenaeum*.⁶⁴ Judging from his earlier private writings, Russell’s view of China had developed significantly over the previous year. This was likely a result of his increasing familiarity with the events of May Fourth, and perhaps also due to the “complex and contradictory” picture painted in books such as this “admirable account of the national and social life of China.” While Russell’s affection for China had not diminished, his previous romanticized view did fade somewhat. He now more clearly judged that “Confucius, one feels, is in China what Aristotle was in Europe until the Renaissance: the great conquering influence for conservatism, traditionalism, and authority.” In contrast to Russell’s cherished Daoists, exemplified by Zhuangzi, who “will not tolerate any interference with what is natural,” the entire “primitive code” of Confucianism centers on what he saw as an oppressive filial piety. Through Confucian doctrines, Russell observes, China appears to have been dominated by a “horror of novelty” for two thousand years, which has stifled knowledge outside of the approved classics, made government cruel and corrupt, and filled life with pain such as the foot

63 For one example, see the abstract of Yuan, Gang and Sun, *Zhongguo dao ziyou zhi lu*.

64 Bertrand Russell, “An Englishman’s China, Review of *China of the Chinese*, by T. C. Werner,” *Athenaeum*, August 8, 1919.

binding of women. Aware of the student movement in China, Russell concludes that a patriotic Chinese person “would necessarily be hostile to the whole of ancient tradition.”

And yet Russell adopts this critical view of China for the reader in order to also insinuate his concerns for China’s future in relation to its past, concerns which would persist into the 1920s and lead to a minor controversy during his trip to China. Its driving force seems to be less China itself, than what he saw as a dangerous worldwide trend of aggressive industrialization and predatory capitalism, which happened to be playing out in China in real-time. He laments that, although “modern China is throwing over tradition, and in so doing is doubtless pursuing the path of happiness for the people ... it is at the same time, and unavoidably, throwing over a heritage of exquisite beauty.” As for a poem he quotes from his copy of Waley, “there is to be no more of this sort of thing.” China’s previous literary road to power is yielding to foreign pressure, which “has made wise government necessary,” but as a result “the beauty that we have lately learned to love is to be swept away through the influence of Western commercialism.” Russell’s conflicted view of China stemmed from his belief that its modernization along Western lines was inevitable and probably necessary for its continued survival as an independent nation, but in the process most of China’s outstanding ancient culture must be destroyed. This was especially unfortunate, he felt, because it was a culture in which he saw the creative impulses as dominant over the possessive impulses. Russell would continue to view this as an either/or choice for China in the decades to come.

One country whose system still seemed promising, not only for China’s future, but Europe’s as well, was Russia. Russell welcomed the Bolshevik Revolution, which unilaterally took Russia out of the war, seeing in this one action alone a shining example for Europe to follow. He was also initially sympathetic to its political aims, in that he saw

its opposition to Europe's hyper-capitalism to be compatible with the platform of the Labour Party, of which he was now a member. But in May 1920 Russell would visit Russia with an official British delegation and return thoroughly disillusioned with nearly everything he saw. This included Vladimir Lenin, whom Russell would see as the embodiment of Bolshevik cruelty. In a private interview, Lenin would tell a shocked Russell that he hoped Britain's Labour Party would come to power "solely in order that the futility of Parliamentarism may be conclusively demonstrated" and Britain's government overthrown by violent revolution as a result.⁶⁵ Russell would return to England to write a series of five articles for the *Nation* and three for the *New Republic*, all expressing his disillusionment. These would then be worked into his longer book *The Practice and Theory of Bolshevism* (1920), which he delivered to his publisher as he was waiting for his ship to depart for China.

While his highly critical articles and book contained his usual, careful qualifications, they were interpreted according to the political leanings of each reader, which only in rare instances worked to Russell's advantage. The articles he wrote were also quickly translated and published in China. Despite his negative views about Bolshevism being unwelcome among his Chinese followers, he would not deviate from their essentials in his speeches there. This would severely limit his potential impact with those Chinese most interested in his visit. For our purposes we can summarize Russell's essential message as follows: "[Socialism] is necessary to the world" and "Bolshevism deserves the gratitude and admiration" of progressives for attempting to carry it out, but

65 Bertrand Russell, *The Practice and Theory of Bolshevism* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1920), 32.

Russell did not believe that “a stable or desirable form of [Socialism]” could be established using the “rough and dangerous” methods of Moscow.⁶⁶

When Russell returned to England he found a letter waiting for him from Fu “Pershing” Tong. Professor Fu was inviting Russell to teach at Peking University for one academic year in return for the generous amount of 2,000 British pounds, plus travel expenses.⁶⁷ The letter acknowledged Russell’s reputation as a philosopher and, though expressing interest in his social views, appeared to be primarily interested in his lecturing on his academic areas of expertise—which is exactly how Russell would interpret the invitation. Russell verified via telegram that the Chinese hoped he could come as soon as possible.⁶⁸ On July 23, while still in the process of writing his articles on Russia, he wrote to his close friend Colette O’Neil that “today I have to decide about Peking, and I have decided to accept. I must digest this Bolshevik business ... besides, I do want to see China.”⁶⁹

In China, interest in Russell reached its highest level of intensity after the public learned of his upcoming visit, and in August Russell too would begin to eagerly anticipate his trip. But there was already a foreshadowing of Russell’s later frustrations in China. While Russell’s letter to Colette on the “deadline” date of July 23 shows that his

66 Russell, *The Practice and Theory of Bolshevism*, 6. In the 1949 edition, Russell replaced the word “Communism” with “Socialism” to better convey his original understanding of the word in 1920. Communism soon came to be identified with Bolshevism and the Soviet Union’s system. Russell was completely opposed to the violent overthrow of the British (or any other) government and so was never a proponent of Lenin’s or Stalin’s Communism.

67 Letter from Pershing T. Fu to Bertrand Russell, June 17, 1920. By way of comparison Russell was offered 800 pounds in an invitation to visit Harvard during the 1912 academic year, which was then the salary of a professor. Factoring in Britain’s inflation figures during the war, Harvard’s offer was roughly 1500 pounds in 1920 terms, meaning Peking University’s offer was very enticing. See Russell, *Autobiography*, 259.

68 Nicholas Griffin, ed., *The Selected Letters of Bertrand Russell: The Public Years, 1914-1970* (London: Routledge, 2001), 204.

69 Letter from Russell to Colette O’Neil, July 23, 1920.

acceptance was far from a foregone conclusion, the major Chinese newspaper *Shenbao* (申报) had already announced almost two weeks earlier that Bertrand Russell, “one of the four major philosophers of modern times,” would soon be arriving to lecture at Peking University.⁷⁰ *Shenbao*’s source: a telegram from Russell on July 6th “accepting the offer.” Bertrand Russell returned to London on June 25 and would write to a friend on June 26 that the shock of Russia was “almost more than I could bear.”⁷¹ It is likely this telegram of July 6 was in fact Russell’s previously mentioned telegram to China requesting more information on dates and that Russell would need more time to make a final decision, especially considering that it entailed accepting a one-year job offer halfway around the world. If Russell’s telegram did in fact only discuss the dates of his appointment, it is possible that *Shenbao*’s premature report was only due to miscommunication. However, in view of later events, it is more probable that Russell’s telegram was understood as being “close enough” to an acceptance, either for *Shenbao* to justify reporting it as a major news scoop, or for Peking University to inform *Shenbao* of Russell’s acceptance of the invitation. If one of these latter cases is in fact what happened, it would not be the last time that Russell would be willfully misunderstood in China.

Nevertheless, Russell’s spirits were rising, and Colette responded that she was happy he was going “for your sake;” “it will all be so strange, the ancient beauty of China, and the Chinese gaiety of spirit which you’ll love. And I’m glad that you won’t feel lonely, but you will have someone to warm your heart,” referring to Dora Black, the

70 “Da zhexuejia Luosu jiang lai beida jiangxue 大哲学家罗素将来北大讲学”, *Shenbao* 《申报》1920年7月11日。Note the reference to Dewey’s lecture. Dewey was the fourth great philosopher in this grouping.

71 Richard A Rempel and Beryl Haslam, eds., *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell, vol. 15: Uncertain Paths to Freedom: Russia and China, 1919-1922* (London: Routledge, 2000), xliii.

26-year-old graduate of Cambridge University, feminist, and social reform advocate with whom Russell was falling in love.⁷²

⁷² Quoted from Clark, *The Life of Bertrand Russell*, 385.

Chapter 3

Bertrand Russell Visits China and China Moves Forward, 1920-1922

After a two-week departure delay, Russell and Dora Black left Marseilles on the *S.S. Porthos* for Shanghai in early September 1920. Though he had just recently expressed his disillusionment with Bolshevism in a very public manner, en route Russell already showed signs of the future sensitivity he would feel in the English-speaking world when what he considered to be his carefully thought out and heavily qualified views were cavalierly misrepresented or taken out of context. He recounts in his autobiography how “on one occasion the English [on his ship] asked me to give an address about Soviet Russia. In view of the sort of people that they were, I said only favourable things about the Soviet Government, so there was nearly a riot, and when we reached Shanghai our English fellow-passengers sent a telegram to the Consulate General in Peking, urging that we should not be allowed to land.”⁷³

Receiving this information, the British Foreign Office (F.O.), which had already taken note of Russell’s planned visit, discussed what steps, if any, should be taken. Their anxiety stemmed less from criticisms Russell might level against Britain than from the propagandizing he might do for the Bolshevik cause, since Britain’s fear of Russia’s declared intention to overthrow foreign governments (referred to as the “Red Menace”) was already accelerating by this time. Thus, Russell’s words on board raised alarm bells. One F.O. officer commented how Russell, though “discredited” in England, would “certainly prove subversive & dangerous to British interests” in China. Discussion

⁷³ Russell, *Autobiography*, 340.

commenced around potential use of the War Powers Act in the event of his seditious writings—“utterances” unfortunately not being covered by the Act. But it was quickly realized that this Act was replaced in 1920 by the China (Amendment) Order-in-Council. This new Order still provided a means for deporting Russell, either for behavior detrimental to the dominions (Act 2) or for printing seditious matter (Act 3); he would no doubt violate one of these two very soon.

Anxiety cooled when one officer noted in Russell’s recent articles that “he returned from Russia thoroughly disillusioned as to the benefits of Bolshevism.” Furthermore, his impromptu speech was not surprising because “he is a crank, and would no doubt antagonize his fellow passengers” in this situation. But, the officer warned, “he is a man of great attainments and honest purpose. It would be a great mistake to revive his discouraged Bolshevism and to make him a martyr by taking action against him.” Only in the event of Russell’s being “dangerously objectionable” should action be taken, and then preferably at the formal request of the Beijing government. Considering later events, Beijing’s government likely was informed that they could, as suggested here, “invite Hon. Clive [Britain’s diplomat in Beijing] to take action” should they object to Russell’s activities.⁷⁴

When Russell’s ship arrived at Shanghai earlier than expected on October 12 no one was there to greet him. Russell “had had from the first a dark suspicion that the invitation might be a practical joke,” and to protect against this possibility required that his Chinese hosts pay his and Dora’s travel expenses up front, which they readily did.⁷⁵

74 British Foreign Office Files (FO): FO 371/5347 F 2568/2568/10

75 Russell, *Autobiography*, 340. The invitation letter already included the payment of his travel expenses in addition to his salary, but he required that this be paid up front before he accepted.

Russell was soon to find out that the invitation was very real, and entailed more than he had anticipated.

A Breakneck Introduction: Shanghai to Changsha, October 14–28, 1920

With the confusion around his arrival cleared up and two more days allowed for preparations, Russell spent his first two weeks in China on an unexpected speaking and sightseeing tour through Shanghai, Hangzhou, Nanjing, Wuhan and Changsha. These two weeks would see him deliver at least eight public lectures, participate in numerous interviews and meetings with various individuals and interest groups (including some from Europe, Korea and Japan), visit several cultural sites and be the guest of honor at many banquets. This would prove exhausting, but most frustrating would be the sense Russell had that, from all sides, he was eagerly being looked to for solutions to China's problems. As Zhang Dongsun described the atmosphere in Shanghai, "when Dewey arrived in China, Pragmatism filled the air. Now that Russell has arrived, the atmosphere has shifted to Russell's socialism."⁷⁶ Yet, in contrast to his two-week tour of Japan after China, where he found the Japanese press and his government-assigned minders to be too oppressive (at one point even physically lashing out at the press in defense of a pregnant Dora), Russell would also see that this intense desire for his opinions had good intentions. Lavishly praising the Chinese in his autobiography: He "had not realised until then that a civilised Chinese is the most civilised person in the world,"⁷⁷ his contemporary letters and writings, while more moderated, also show how he ultimately came to appreciate the

76 Zhang Dongsun 张东荪: "Fei gequ liang zhong maobing bu ke 非革去两种毛病不可", *Shishi Xinbao* 《时事新报》1920年10月18日.

77 Russell, *Autobiography*, 341.

dignity the Chinese maintained in the course of their desperate struggle for national salvation.

On the evening of October 14, Russell attended a welcome banquet collectively arranged by seven organizations, four of which were educational, two newspapers, one Christian, and apparently none affiliated with Russell's Peking University hosts or involved in his invitation to China.⁷⁸ Over 100 people were in attendance, including Chen Duxiu and Zhang Dongsun. The Beijing-based newspaper *Chenbao* (晨报) was among those that reported on the welcome speeches.⁷⁹ To begin, the banquet's chairman Shen Xinqing (沈信卿) welcomed Russell, emphasizing China's "hope that during his year-long stay, Mr. Russell can help guide us towards the completion of our national reconstruction," and in keeping with this theme, remarked in closing that "before he heads off to lecture all over the country, we ask him to first kindly provide us with some brief instruction tonight."

After some polite words, Russell replied with what must have been surprise that, "as I've only just arrived, how could I presume to lecture China on its reconstruction? China is not alone in this need; Europe too needs reconstruction. It is through the reformation of Europe that I hope to play a role in assisting the Chinese people!" Russell expressed his lack of interest in transplanting into China the methods of Europe from the past 100 years, unconscionable methods he said that encouraged plunder and destruction. The European war has shown the ultimate cost of this type of modernization. "China's

78 These seven organizations were: Jiangsu Education Association (江苏教育总会), Chinese Vocational Training Society (中华职业教育社), New Education for Common Advancement Society (新教育共进社), National University (中国公学), *Shishi Xinbao* 《时事新报》, *Shenbao* 《申报》, Christian National Salvation Association (基督教救国会).

79 "Hu qi tuanti huanying Luosu ji 沪七团体欢迎罗素记", *Chenbao* 《晨报》1920年10月16日. In Cao, *Tongwang ziyou zhi lu*, 14-15.

traditional culture, for example its literature and art, has a value necessary of preservation.” If he were forced to choose one route for China’s reconstruction, it would be through mass education—defined and run by the Chinese, not Western missionaries or businessmen—rather than anything that could be imported from Europe.

After Russell finished his brief dinner speech, another Chinese speaker rose to say “China’s most revered philosopher Confucius has long dominated Chinese thought, but he has gone out of fashion with the changing times. Speaking for myself, I hope that Mr. Russell’s works will succeed Confucius in guiding our country.”

Doubling down on his comments from the previous evening, the next day Russell gave a lecture at the National University (中国公学) in Shanghai entitled “Principles of Social Reconstruction” and reprinted in *Chenbao*.⁸⁰ Russell noted that the European system of the previous 100 years had failed, and Europe now needs a new principle of reconstruction after the war. In this process *all* countries’ voices should be heard.

“Although many people have already voiced their thoughts, few are of any value,” but, “if we are to seek from more ancient voices, I find the words of Laozi—‘production without possession, action without self-assertion, development without domination’—to be of the greatest value. I would like to take these ideas as the basis for my talk today.”

Reiterating the basic ideas of *Principles of Social Reconstruction*, Russell then observed that while European industry is already very developed, and therefore requires a greater effort to implement reforms, “Chinese industry is still in its infancy.” He hoped “that future industrialization in China does not follow in the footsteps of the West” because it stifles people’s nature to extreme levels. He did, however, “presume to declare that

80 “Shehui gaizao yuanli 社会改造原理”, *Chenbao* 《晨报》1920年10月17日. In Yuan, Sun and Ren, *Zhongguo dao ziyou zhi lu*, 3-4.

Chinese industry *must* develop.” As for the best means of industrial development, Russell favored guild associations, a European concept that had yet to be implemented anywhere, but “I don’t presume to say whether it should be done in China, or whether another method should be sought.” Turning to what was likely the main message that Russell hoped to convey to his Chinese audience, he emphasized that “having just arrived in China I find everything interesting, except for a revulsion at all imitations of the West. It would be a terrible shame if China, in the process of industrialization, were to give up everything of cultural and artistic value in its ancient traditions.” He also warned that Russia’s recent experiences showed that any reforms undertaken in China should not be such as to result in its isolation from the rest of the world.

Russell followed up this talk with one the next day, October 16, on the “Uses of Education” for the Jiangsu Education Association (江苏教育总会);⁸¹ Russell’s views on education were avidly sought over the coming days, likely as a result of his prioritizing Chinese education in his banquet speech, but also because of his years teaching at Cambridge University and his present faculty position at the illustrious Peking University. As he expounded on his current thinking to an audience of 600-700 people,⁸² again hedging his statements against his lack of familiarity with Chinese conditions, Russell was already becoming concerned with the pattern he was beginning to see. On October 18, only four days into his trip, he wrote to his sometime companion Constance Malleson that the Chinese “don’t want technical philosophy, they want practical advice, social reconstruction.” He lamented how he needed to go around “pretending to be a

81 “Jiaoyu zhi xiaoyong 教育之效用”, *Chenbao* 《晨报》1920年10月24日. In Yuan, Sun and Ren, *Zhongguo dao ziyou zhi lu*, 5-6.

82 “San tuanti gong qing Luosu yanjiang ji 三团体公请罗素演讲记”, *Shenbao* 《申报》1920年10月17日.

Sage” and participating in “endless lectures and interviews,” since the Chinese “seem to think I must know by inspiration what they need.”⁸³ In one such sagely interview with *Shenbao* three days prior, we see Russell being encouraged to speak expansively on world trends, in the process declaring that “America will become the world’s strongest power. For the next 100 years the world trend will be in the hands of America,” and “within 20 years, Germany will recover its original position,” and condemning the League of Nations as a “farce” intended to “preserve the spoils of war” and “limit the means for weak nations to become strong.”⁸⁴ All this Russell believed sincerely, and turned out to be very accurate, but to broadcast such predictions was not why he had come to China.

Meanwhile, Russell’s praise of traditional China began to receive some blow-back after it was reported by *Shenbao* in a manner appealing to its more conservative readership. One article reporting on Russell’s welcome banquet, and subtitled “Dr. Russell says China should preserve its ancient national essence,” was particularly controversial in intellectual circles because of the baggage associated with the term *guocui* (国粹), or national essence.⁸⁵ Charlotte Furth describes the *guocui* movement as one of three neo-traditional revolutionary thought trends at the turn of the century which sought the overthrow of Imperial China and a revitalization of China’s pre-Qin past. (It was inspired by an earlier *kokusai* movement in Japan, where it was written with the

83 Letter from Russell to Constance Malleison, October 18, 1920.

84 “Luosu boshi zhi tanhua: yan meiguo jiang wei shijie zhi lingxiu 罗素博士之谈话——言美国将为世界之领袖”, *Shenbao* 《申报》1920年10月16日. In Cao, *Tongwang ziyou zhi lu*, 16-18.

85 “Ge tuanti huanying Luosu boshi ji: Luo boshi yan zhongguo yi boacun guyou guocui 各团体欢迎罗素博士记: 罗博士言中国宜保存固有国粹”, *Shenbao* 《申报》1920年10月14日. In Cao, *Tongwang ziyou zhi lu*, 12-13. One can distinguish *Shenbao* from the more progressive *Chenbao* most immediately through its use of a traditional writing style, as opposed to *Chenbao*’s use of *baihua*.

same Chinese characters and is thus in fact one of the many modern Chinese loan words from Japanese.) Although *guocui* proponents acknowledged the West as a civilization in its own right, they were motivated to “search for historically rooted native alternatives to the crumbling imperial Confucian orthodoxy.” As Furth notes, by 1919 “the movement appeared a clear loser in the battle over China’s New Culture.” Nevertheless, we can see from *Shenbao*’s reporting that China’s neo-traditional movements still had proponents who were willing to use Russell’s words for their ends.⁸⁶ While Russell certainly never used this English term, and was likely not translated thus by his sympathetic, Harvard-educated interpreter and Tsinghua University professor Zhao Yuanren, *Shenbao* was also not being entirely disingenuous when it claimed this to be Russell’s ultimate message, even if it did suit *Shenbao*’s own social and political agenda.

After reading this article, and very likely also Russell’s lecture printed in *Chenbao* on October 17, Zhou Zuoren (周作人), the brother of Lu Xun and an intellectual leader in his own right, wrote a scathing op-ed for *Chenbao* entitled “Russell and National Essence” under the pseudonym “Zhongmi” (仲密).⁸⁷ In it he declared China to have already been cut off from its ancient traditions, and that “the people of today’s republic have already forgotten about your so-called ‘development without domination’ and what have you, but instead cherish a desire to ‘revere the emperor and expel the barbarian’ (尊王攘夷),” a Japanese slogan that inspired the Meiji Restoration. However,

86 Charlotte Furth, “Intellectual Change: From the Reform Movement to the May Fourth Movement, 1895-1920,” In *An Intellectual History of Modern China*, Merle Goldman and Leo Ou-Fan Lee, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 41-52.

87 Zhong Mi 仲密 (Zhou Zuoren 周作人): “Luosu yu guocui 罗素与国粹”, *Chenbao* 《晨报》1920年10月19日. In Cao, *Tongwang ziyou zhi lu*, 19. This pseudonym is a pun with a double meaning: as a reference to the courtesy name of Confucius, Zhongni (仲尼), and as an implied reference to his being the younger brother of Lu Xun, 仲 meaning “second son” (as Confucius was) and 密 meaning “secret.”

hinting at the difference in Chinese and Japanese responses to *guocui/kokusai*, Zhou also insinuates that this Japanese slogan is dangerously close to the retrogressive conservative Chinese slogan of the same period: “revive antiquity and repel the foreigner” (复古排外), showing how easily the Chinese can be misled. To Zhou, the Chinese are children who cannot appreciate ancient writings; “Even though a few old books have some value, in the eyes of unworthy children they are just black ink on white paper ... they only embellish the bookshelves of fools and don’t touch their minds.” In practice this meant that “if you call on someone to value Laozi and Zhuangzi, he’ll read their works together with books on divination and astrology [into which popular Daoism had long-since devolved]; he won’t be able to understand the former, but he’ll love the latter and think China’s national essence lies here.” A clean break with the past was the most fail-safe approach. Addressing Russell directly, Zhou asked “Why do the Chinese like Rabindranath Tagore? Because he is for Easternization and against Westernization. Why are they happy when you talk of national essence and Easternization? Because they’re lazy, avoid hard thinking, and fear change.” Turning to his readers Zhou concludes that “Russell has just arrived in China, so he doesn’t really understand Chinese conditions. I hope it’s not long before he learns that China’s bad parts are greater than its good; Chinese people are by nature full of self-importance and should not be praised.... We welcome Russell’s thoughts on social reconstruction. This is the only thing we seek from him.”

Zhou was not the only Chinese intellectual to invite Russell to assist in solving China’s problems according to constraints set out for him in advance.⁸⁸ A 26-year-old

⁸⁸ In fact, Zhang Dongsun appears to be the only intellectual across the entire ideological spectrum in China whose thinking developed significantly along unexpected lines in response to Russell’s visit, and ironically also the only one to turn bitterly against him as a result, as will be seen.

called Johnson Yuan (袁振英), who was “Secretary of the Anarchist-Communist Association,” frequent translator and occasional contributor to *Xin Qingnian* and elsewhere (often under the pen name 震瀛), and who could write English fairly well, wrote to Russell directly. He conveyed the Chinese students’ eagerness at having “the greatest social philosopher of [the] world to arrive here in China, so as to salve the Chronic diseases of the thought of Chinese Students,” who, since 1919, have been the greatest source of hope for China’s future. His primary concern, however, was with counteracting the influence of John Dewey, since “most of our students are not satisfied with his conservative theory.” Using “we” and “us” apparently to represent his own anarchist-communist contingent, Yuan told Russell that “in a word, we are anxious to get the knowledge of the social revolutionary philosophy,” of “Anarchism, Syndicalism, Socialism, etc.”—in a word, the contents of Russell’s *Roads to Freedom*. Yuan requested that Russell “recorrect the theory of Dr Dewey” and “give us fundamentally the thorough Social philosophy, based on Anarchism.” Russell must have felt this letter to be representative of the general expectations he encountered during his trip, and so included it in his autobiography.⁸⁹

Yuan also wrote of his “hopes for Russell” in a Chinese article published in *Juewu* (觉悟) the day after Russell’s banquet.⁹⁰ To his Chinese audience he wrote how Dewey was initially popular, but many found his pragmatism at odds with the

89 Letter from Johnson Yuan to Bertrand Russell, October 6, 1920. In Russell, Bertrand, *Autobiography*, 350-351. Russell makes the note “[? Nov.]” on the date since Yuan refers to meeting Russell at his welcome banquet prior to the date Russell reached China. It’s not clear when Russell received the letter, but Yuan could have known he would be present and written this in advance. Judging from this person’s other writings, it is likely that Yuan would not have anticipated the confusion that could result from this earlier dating.

90 Zhen Ying 震瀛: “Wo dui Luosu de xiwang 我对罗素的希望”, *Juewu* 《觉悟》1920年10月15日.

revolutionary spirit of the times. American culture cannot compare with Europe's, Yuan declares. "Dr. Dewey is an American philosopher, which we shouldn't hold against him, but we also shouldn't take his works as gospel, but should expand our horizons. Since we are disappointed in Dr. Dewey, we must place our hopes in Dr. Russell." Furthermore, unlike Dewey, whom Yuan saw as an unapologetic representative of American religion and capitalism, Russell had the right credentials. He was a radical social reformer who "had learned many lessons from the British government, and thereby had a thorough awakening (觉悟)." For proof one only need look at his *Roads to Freedom*, where he analyzes the various revolutionary political systems with such clarity. Russell also preaches a "pure socialism" that will satisfy the Chinese much more than Dewey's political philosophy. He was an antiwar activist who was willing to sacrifice his freedom for that righteous cause; "this didn't hurt him, but only increased his awakening, making him the most extreme of reformers—an anarchist scholar." Even Russell's pedigree is correct according to Yuan's confused understanding of English society; Russell was a commoner (平民), not an aristocrat (贵族), since he was a second son, and so according to Britain's traditional social system has had to struggle (奋斗) for everything he's got. Yuan concluded that Russell, unlike Dewey, is someone the Chinese can learn from.

However, the minor national essence controversy that began two days later with Zhou Zuoren's op-ed spread concerns about Russell that spurred Zhang Shenfu to come to his defense. In a pseudonymous response published in *Chenbao* on October 20, Zhang, who like Zhou was not present at the welcome banquet, attempted to clarify that Russell had simply said that China should not be dependent on Western capitalists and imperialists to develop its industry. Rather China should tend to its own spirit (精神).

“How can *Shenbao* conclude from this that he is calling on China to preserve its national essence? He certainly is saying—has always said—that Chinese art has value” and that he “hopes we won’t cast it aside ... [but] taking the phrase ‘preserve national essence’, with all its commonly understood implications, and associating it with the progressive Russell not only slanders Russell, but I’m afraid will also deceive the common people.” On behalf of those like himself who were dependent on news reports for knowledge of Russell’s activities, Zhang expressed his “hope that those translating and transcribing Russell’s speeches will be more careful in the future to avoid further misunderstandings.” As if to underline the public’s lack of knowledge about Russell, Zhang also clarified persistent confusions around his Cambridge University position (he was a lecturer, not a professor), formal education level (he did not have a Ph.D., so was not “Dr.” (博士) Russell) and his relationship with Dora Black (she was not his wife).⁹¹

In the meantime, Russell had continued his itinerary, touring Hangzhou for two days and speaking on education at the Zhejiang Number One Teachers School on the 19th, attending a banquet in Shanghai on the 20th again hosted by the Jiangsu Education Association, and speaking on Einstein to the Science Society of China in Nanjing on the 21st. He then traveled the Yangtze, stopping and speaking at Hankou in Wuhan before finally arriving by train to Changsha for an educational conference. Hearing of Russell’s upcoming trip to China, this conference was quickly arranged under the enterprising leadership of the local warlord, Tan Yankai, who ensured that an invitation was waiting

91 Hao Ming 皓明 (Zhang Shenfu 张申府): “Guoren duiyu Luosu de wujie 国人对于罗素得误解”, *Chenbao* 《晨报》1920年10月20日. In Cao, *Tongwang ziyou zhi lu*, 21-22. Part of this letter to *Chenbao* contains a reprint of Zhang’s letter to *Shishi Xinbao* under his own name. As a result, some traditional Chinese would soon refer to Dora as being Russell’s concubine. Another anonymous defense of Russell by ‘F. L.’ in the same issue with Zhou Zuoren’s article suggests that there is no contradiction in a country that admires its past while also modernizing. F. L. apparently did not share Zhou’s concerns about *guocui* as a slippery slope to ‘backwardness’. See F. L.: “Gaizao shehui yu baoxun guicui 改造社会与保存国粹”, *Chenbao* 《晨报》1920年10月19日. In Cao, *Tongwang ziyou zhi lu*, 20.

for Russell when he arrived at Shanghai. The invitation letter from Hunan's educational society remarked that "the extent to which your moral and intellectual power has reached is so high that all the people of this country are paying the greatest regard to you." Therefore, "we, Hunanese, eagerly desire to hear your powerful instructions as a compass."⁹² Hearing that John Dewey also agreed to participate, he accepted the invitation. News of Peking University president Cai Yuanpei's attendance also likely played a role.

While en route to Changsha, Russell was interviewed by Yang Duanliu (杨端六). Yang was an economist and editor of *Dongfang Zazhi*, one of China's major periodicals. He seems to have had no agenda to push, and at 35 was old enough to not let himself be swept away by "Russell fever," but he was still progressive in mindset and appreciated the significance of Russell's visit. In a leisurely discussion that was published a month later, Yang, who acknowledged to his readers his lack of a deep familiarity with Russell's works, first sought his impressions of China.⁹³ Able by now to anticipate that his interlocutor was not interested in hearing praise of China's beauty, a stressed out Russell simply replied that he had not been in China long, had been busy with many things, had only met educated Chinese, and had not had time to study China's conditions. So, he would prefer to be in China a few more months before speaking on its affairs. More gravely, Russell warned that, "if it continues this way, there will be no benefit to my coming, neither for China nor for myself." To this Yang sheepishly countered that "because we respect you, everyone welcomes you. Because we admire your works,

92 Letter from The General Educational Association of Hunan to Bertrand Russell, October 11, 1920. In Russell, Bertrand, *Autobiography*, 351.

93 Yang Duanliu 杨端六: "He Luosu xiansheng de tanhua: zai Changsha yanjiang 和罗素先生的谈话: 在长沙演讲", *Dongfang Zazhi* 《东方杂志》1920年 第17卷 第22其 9-17页.

everyone wants to hear you speak.” But Russell was firm: “it’s because I want to do all I can for China through my visit that I first need an opportunity to study Chinese conditions, and not be out wasting my days with social engagements (应酬).”

Yang’s next question reflected what may have been a common assumption that, if Bertrand Russell had come to China prepared to teach philosophy, he must also have come either prepared to account for Confucius or at least interested in studying China’s philosophy. Asked about this likely not for the first time, Russell was clear: “I definitely did not come to study Chinese philosophy; I came to study China’s social conditions. I think this issue isn’t just interesting, it’s very important. If I wish to make any contribution to China, it is in this area” (and not as a Second Confucius, as was suggested at his welcome banquet). As a sign of his seriousness, he even revealed his desire to study the Chinese language, an idea also floated in his October 18th letter to Constance, but which he never followed through on. Looking to buy more time, Russell predicted that “by the end of the year I will be able to understand the basics of China’s political and social affairs, and then next year begin to speak on how to direct China.”

Regarding his till-now almost daily speaking engagements, Russell also warned that public speeches and academic lectures were not where his contributions could be made. This was something he had long since decided, writing about his college years in his autobiography that “I derived no benefits from lectures, and I made a vow to myself that when in due course I became a lecturer I would not suppose that lecturing did any good.”⁹⁴ Instead, Russell’s contributions could come through: 1) private discussions, and

94 Russell, Bertrand, *Autobiography*, 57. Russell concludes by saying “I have kept this vow.” Russell also believed he could more effectively reach a wider audience through one written piece than through a whole lecture tour. It is possible that he didn’t know, at least by this point, that his lectures in China were being transcribed according to his interpreter’s words and published verbatim in its newspapers as coming from his own mouth. This wasn’t common practice in England.

2) his public writings. The second, Russell told Yang, was his own responsibility, but he shared responsibility for the first with the Chinese. Yang made Russell's appeal clear to his Chinese readers: if the Chinese did not provide him with useful information, then he would not become informed and his presence would not be of any use. "So I think it is important who accompanies him."

As if to expose Russell's need for information, and again slightly transgressing his self-imposed embargo on expressing opinions about China's internal conditions, the conversation then turned to his new take that "China's most pressing need is to develop industry." Russell asked what China's returned students were doing and why they were not entering government to assist China's reconstruction? (China's several warlord governments were more concerned with their power struggle than enlightened rule.) He advised that foreign labor would be acceptable as a means for development, but capital investment should come from the Chinese to ensure full sovereignty. To this suggestion Yang informed him that China did not possess the capitalists necessary to industrialize at this scale. "In that case it must fall on education," Russell replied, reverting back to his default option. Given the Bolshevik's current failures, it was not possible for China to industrialize free from foreign control without a homegrown capitalist class.

If Russell's words to Yang appear at points to be lecturing in tone, this reflected Russell's general sense of frustration. Aside from his life-long aversion to playing—or allowing anyone else to play—the oracle,⁹⁵ it was no clearer to Russell then than it is to us now just how appropriate it was for him to be spending his first weeks being taken

⁹⁵ This is not to say he did not express his opinions bluntly, and often with an oracular certainty—he did a lot of this in his life. He just didn't want his readers to worship him and blindly follow him without thinking critically for themselves. This stems from the near contempt in which he held other such historical figures, including philosophers, who acted this way.

around central China before reporting to Peking University, which was paying him a generous lump sum for time that technically included his current travels after his delayed arrival. Everything Russell wrote indicates that he thought he would go directly to Beijing with a minimum of “fuss” over his arrival, but instead he would arrive and immediately undergo “three of the most bewildering days that I have ever experienced.”⁹⁶ When the unexpected and unwelcome news came from his hosts in Changsha that they had one full week planned out for him, including slots for eight of his lectures, he politely informed them, despite their urging, that he would only stay one overnight before departing for Beijing. But as a sign of goodwill, he offered to deliver an exhausting four lectures during that time and participate in a multitude of other arranged activities, resulting in “the busiest thirty hours I ever spent in my life.”⁹⁷ He prepared his lectures according to the requested topic “at a moment’s notice.” Writing to Constance on October 25 in one of his least charitable moments in China, he concluded that the Chinese simply “have too much respect for their ancient sages,” a vacancy they were now trying to fill with himself, and therefore, considering how obvious his lack of qualifications for this role should have been to them, dismissed the Chinese as “intellectually not grown up.”⁹⁸

Yang Duanliu was sympathetic to Russell’s frustrations and raised his “concerns about Russell’s welcome” to China’s attention in an op-ed published on October 27. In it, he advised against inviting people to China with the expectation that they would solve their problems for them. “I often see us Chinese mistake means for ends and thus run around here and there. It’s all superficial and has no impact on reality.” While avoiding

96 Russell, *Autobiography*, 340.

97 Bertrand Russell, “Sketches of Modern China: I. – The Feast and the Eclipse,” *Nation & Athenaeum*, December 3, 1921.

98 Letter from Bertrand Russell to Constance Malleson, October 25, 1920.

explicit mention of Russell, Yang saw “Dewey’s welcome as a good example. When we heard Dewey had arrived at Shanghai, he was inundated with speaking invitations.” Each organization thought that simply “by asking a foreign scholar to talk to them for one or two hours, they could gain some luster for their group.” But no one knows everything, and no one can know something before seeking to understand it. “When we invite a foreign scholar to China, we should ask him to talk about his area of expertise and not treat him as a deity by asking him to speak on any and every topic.” Yang argued that invited guests should be given time to first understand China and prepare their materials, and not be “immediately asked to start speaking across China the second we hear they’ve arrived.”⁹⁹

Chen Duxiu echoed Yang regarding both Russell and Dewey, with the intention of satirizing the Shanghai society where he was currently taking refuge from Beijing’s authorities. He ridiculed the advertisements for The Commercial Press that dotted Russell’s welcome banquet and mocked the transparent efforts to co-opt Russell’s identity, either by the “stubborn insistence that he urged China to preserve its national essence” or by “endlessly repeating at whose invitation Russell was being hosted” (which must have been a laborious process since seven organizations signed on for his welcome banquet). But, Chen noted, when it came “to Russell’s vocal opposition to capitalism, they plug their ears.”¹⁰⁰

Despite his frustration, Russell was also capable of seeing the bigger picture when writing about China for the Western public. He would witness his criticisms of Russia be

99 Yang Duanliu 杨端六: “Huanying Luosu zhi xinshi 欢迎罗素之心事”, *Xinghua* 《兴华》第17卷第41期, 31页. Also printed in *Changsha Dagong Bao* 《长沙大公报》 and *Shishi Xinbao* 《时事新报》.

100 Chen Duxiu 陈独秀: “San lun Shanghai shehui 三论上海社会”, *Xin Qingnian* 《新青年》第8卷, 第3期, 135页.

cited by otherwise unsympathetic politicians like David Lloyd George and Winston Churchill as evidence that their hawkish policies were justified, and saw to it that nothing he said about China could be similarly used.¹⁰¹ En route to Beijing, he wrote down his impressions for his close “Bloomsbury” friend Ottoline Morrell, with permission to release what she saw fit in his letter for publication under his name.¹⁰² Russell fully praised various aspects of China’s beauty and described his cultural experiences in detail, knowing that these genuinely positive impressions would be of interest to his Western readers. He also described his welcome as “Confucius the Second” and his hectic schedule “among Chinese students and journalists who are more or less Europeanized.” He mentioned the “embarrassing respect” with which he was treated and described the “eagerness for knowledge on the part of students” as being quite extraordinary; “when one begins to speak, their eyes have the look of starving men beginning a feast.” He made what for him would be a meaningful observation, that “bad government seems somewhat less disastrous in China than it would be in a European nation,” but cautioned that “this is, perhaps, a superficial impression which time may correct.” Russell would maintain

101 Regarding Prime Minister David Lloyd George’s use of Russell’s Bolshevik articles, see his statement on August 10, 1920 in Hansard. See letter from Richard Lee to Russell, October 28, 1920 containing Churchill’s public statements. Reaction to Russell’s criticisms of Russia partly accounts for his later hesitance to criticize China’s flaws in public. Russell soon vented his bitterness in letters to Constance on Jan. 6, 1921: “I find myself still thinking that they [the Bolsheviks] are exactly as bad as Curzon and Winston [Churchill], indeed hardly different,” and on Jan. 18, 1921: “I find them [Bolsheviks] totally devoid of every vestige of human kindness—men essentially akin to Winston.” Also see letter to Elizabeth Russell on Feb. 16, 1921, where he noted that reaction to his book entailed being “praised by people I hate—e.g. Winston and Lloyd George.” It’s worth noting that, much later in life, Russell would reflect in a letter to Helen Bevington in 1952: “I spent years of my life trying to hate Lloyd George, but without success. He was too lovable, much like Churchill: political scoundrels both, but you could not really dislike them” (see Bracers 131290).

102 Letter from Russell to Ottoline Morrell, October 28, 1920. This letter was eventually published with minimal alterations as Bertrand Russell, “The Happiness of China,” *Nation*, January 8, 1921. Edited out, probably by Ottoline, was his comment that “the Europeans [that Russell saw in China] almost all look villainous and ill.”

this impression until the Shanghai purge of April 1927, after which it was permanently revised.

China Debates Some Proposed Roads to National Rejuvenation

Russell's first two weeks in China reflect the sense of urgency and intensity of feeling that many Chinese had about their country's future. Many clearly believed that, through just a few magic words from a sage, China's future could be permanently altered for the better. To that end a variety of groups tried to enlist Russell's identity in their cause. Russell's lifestyle would settle down and become more predictable after he arrived in Beijing on October 31, although his schedule would remain full for months to come. However, in the month following Russell's four lectures at Changsha on Bolshevism, Chinese intellectuals would enter into a major debate that did not involve Russell personally, despite the effort of Chen Duxiu.¹⁰³

In Changsha, Russell was asked to speak on politics and social economics to an audience of educationalists and political figures representing each county in Hunan. His four lectures on "Bolshevism and World Government" were split between two days and repeated much of the content in his book on Russia. In a basic statement of belief that would help frame his later image in China, Russell declared that "even though I think communism is a good theory and a cultural advance, I believe it should be implemented

103 For further discussion, see Ogden, "The Sage in the Inkpot." Gao Bo 高波, *Zhuixun xin gonghe: Zhang Dongsun zaoqi sixiang yu huodong yanjiu (1886-1932)* 追寻新共和: 张东荪早期思想与活动研究 (1886-1932) [The Search for a New Republic: A Study on Thoughts and Activities of Zhang Dongsun at His Early Age (1886-1932)] (Beijing: Sanlian · hafoyanjing (Harvard-Yenching) xueshu zongshu, 2018), 243-253. Huang, Zhaohui 黄兆慧, "Luosu sixiang zai Shanghai de chuanbo ji qi yingxiang" 罗素思想在上海的传播及其影响 [The transmission and influence of Russell in Shanghai], *Shanghai wenhua (Shanghai Culture)* 上海文化 10 (2018): 75-83. Li Jianmei 李健美 and Jiang Liping 江丽萍, "huanyuan luosu changsha jiangyan dui buershenweike de zhenyi lunshu 还原罗素长沙讲演对布尔什维克的真意论述" [A discussion on restoring the true meaning to Russell's Changsha lectures on Bolshevism], *Jiangxi Social Sciences* (June 2011): pp. 145-148.

incrementally. Other methods besides force and repression should be employed to drive the masses.” Turning to a new message for China, Russell also wanted “to warn the audience that, although the Bolsheviks claim to be using a variety of provocative methods for the sole purpose of helping the oppressed peoples of the East regain their freedom, I am afraid that in reality they only wish to exploit this cherished word as a means for expanding their own power base.” At any rate, according to Marxist doctrine “communism is only amenable to industrialized countries. It isn’t suitable for agricultural countries,” and so was not appropriate for China at the current time; China needed to industrialize first.¹⁰⁴

Russell’s lectures were reported in major papers throughout China in a way that seems to have implied no great controversy. *Chenbao* reported that “Russell, taking the English view of liberty, went against the tide by criticizing Bolshevism while still urging the ultimate realization of communism.” However, this statement itself would create no small confusion among those who thought Bolshevism and Communism were two words for the same thing; *Chenbao* would be inundated with reader requests for clarification and The Commercial Press would even write a letter to Russell requesting he send them a statement for publication “in order to make the people understand what the difference is between Communism and Bolshevism.”¹⁰⁵ Compounding the issues of communication was the fact that the Hunan authorities were not progressives in the mold of Sun Yat-sen’s later Canton regime, in spite of warlord Tan Yankai’s pursuit of Russell, which may have

104 Russell’s complete Changsha lectures can be found in Yuan, Sun and Ren, *Zhongguo dao ziyou zhi lu*, 12-27. These were published in *Minguo Ribao* between November 3-9 1920. See also Li and Jiang, “Huanyuan luosu changsha jiangyan dui buershenweike de zhenyi lunshu.”

105 Letter from C. Yang (Commercial Press) to Russell, December 16, 1920. Russell never wrote the statement. Ding Zijiang summarizes this confusion in Ding, *Luosu yu zhonghua wenhua*, 14. It is only important for showing how even translation issues and minor nuances of meaning could lead to problems.

been nothing more than an attempt to increase the national prestige of his own regime. In a letter to *Minguo Ribao*, local reporter Feng Wei (凤蔚) told how Zhao Yuanren and Yang Duanliu, acting as Russell's interpreters, chose not to be entirely accurate as a result of local sensitivities, for example ignoring Russell's equating of Bolshevism with religion because of the local government's fears of extremist movements (过激主义). Feng's letter sought to clarify on Russell's behalf that "he has previously claimed that Bolshevism is not extremist;" this attribute of Bolshevism was just something "fabricated by the Japanese."¹⁰⁶

In some minor respects, therefore, it appears that Russell was not represented or understood clearly in Changsha, but for the most part his key message was clear and provided fodder for debate.¹⁰⁷ Mao Zedong, who attended Russell's Changsha lectures and was possibly one official note-taker for the local edition of *Dagong Bao* (大公报), avidly discussed Russell's ideas with his study group in Changsha. Mao had no part in the subsequent national debate, but his long summary written for his comrades then in France is important, primarily because of what Mao became, but also because his group likely reflects many similar groups of the time whose records have not been carefully preserved.

106 Feng Wei 凤蔚: "Changsha teyue tongxin 长沙特约通信", *Minguo Ribao* 《民国日报》1920年11月14日. Quoted from Li Jianmei and Jiang Liping, "Huanyuan luosu changsha jiangyan dui buershenweike de zhenyi lunshu."

107 One can certainly also say with Suzanne Ogden that a normally arrogant Russell stumbled by not making himself clear in China, particularly in Changsha, thereby exposing "a great man's capacity for foolishness and superficiality" (p. 531). However, to Russell's mind, knowledge about things like the difference between Bolshevism and Communism and that Marx taught that a sequence of events must come to pass before the realization of Communism were prerequisites for engaging in serious public discussion on such matters. His private letters expressed his frustration that this 'homework' was apparently never done by the Chinese he encountered. Mao, a target audience member for Russell in China and later canonized under Marxist-Leninist-Mao Zedong Thought, was said to have admitted to Molotov when visiting Stalin in the USSR 30 years later that he never read Marx's *Capital*. Mao likely did not differ in this way from his comrades in 1920. Russell certainly would have read it in its entirety, as he did Hegel and every other philosopher, if only to ultimately reject them, most famously in Bertrand Russell, *The History of Western Philosophy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1945).

Mao's group was unanimous on its desire for socialism over capitalism, but when discussion turned to the method for achieving this, a clear divergence of opinion appeared. Some, such as "Zisheng" and "Hesheng," agreed with Russell that it should be effected through peaceful means and not through dictatorship "of the workers and peasants." Mao's famous assessment of Russell's position was "summed up in two sentences: This is all very well in theory; in reality it can't be done." More informative, particularly in the context of Russell's tentative prescriptions for China, is Mao's short discussion that followed. The "crux of [Russell's] arguments," and of his supporters in Mao's group, was that China should "use the method of education." Mao, still several years away from recognizing the power of education-as-peasant indoctrination, rejected this as infeasible because it required money, people and institutions, all of which were controlled by the capitalists who could only be expected to use them to their own ends. Therefore, "education in today's world is capitalist education" and there was no hope that this would change without a fight. It was already clear, then, that while Russell's words resonated with some of Mao's comrades, they had little chance of changing Mao's own preference for the "terrorist tactic" of "a Russian-style revolution."¹⁰⁸

Of greater contemporary importance—in part because it helped to spur the types of discussions conducted by local groups such as Mao's—was the national debate launched by Zhang Dongsun's short letter "Lessons from a Trip to the Interior" published in *Shishi Xinbao*.¹⁰⁹ Traveling with Russell to attend the conference in Changsha, Zhang

108 Mao Zedong, "Letter to Xiao Xudong, Cai Linbing, and the Other Members in France (December 1, 1920)." In *Mao's Road to Power, Revolutionary Writings 1912-1949: Volume II – National Revolution and Social Revolution, December 1920-June 1927*, ed. Stuart R. Schram (London: M.E. Sharp, 1994), 5-14.

109 Zhang Dongsun 张东荪: "You neidi lüxing er de zhi you yi jiaoxun 由内地旅行而得之又一教训", *Shishi Xinbao* 《时事新报》1920年11月5日. Also included in "Guanyu shehuizhuyi de taolun 关于社会主义的讨论", *Xin Qingnian* 《新青年》第8卷第4号, 1920年12月.

would write of what was to him the surprising state of affairs outside of China's major urban centers. "China's only illness is poverty, which it suffers from in the extreme." Therefore, China "is not qualified to speak of socialism—it doesn't have the luxury to talk about any 'ism'." Zhang's views were his own, and as a prominent public intellectual were taken seriously, but he had the knowledge that his words were backed by Bertrand Russell. As with other writers, Zhang had written of his "hope for Russell" two weeks earlier, at that time rhetorically asking him whether China's trade associations were sufficient as a foundation on which to implement their shared preference for guild socialism.¹¹⁰ Now he would write that, "to save China we only have one road ... to increase prosperity. And to increase prosperity we must develop industry ... Russell himself said after a wide investigation that China's only means for picking itself up is to develop industry. I think this is painful but true." He challenged his peers with a call to *action* to "raise the living standard of the masses to a level worthy of humans, because empty talk of 'isms' will produce no results."

The response was swift and, within the May Fourth movement, almost universally critical. Chen Wangdao (陈望道), translator of the *Communist Manifesto* in 1920 and later president of Fudan University from 1949-1977, questioned whether this could be the same author who wrote the influential article "Why do we want to talk about socialism?" in *Jiefang yu Gaizao*: "Dongsun! Now you're casting off socialism in order to 'develop industry', but could it be that to 'develop industry' you are suggesting we use

110 Dongsun 东荪: "Duiyu Luosu xiansheng zhi yi xiwang 对于罗素先生之一希望", *Shishi Xinbao* 《时事新报》1920年10月20日.

capitalism?”¹¹¹ Another writer Shao Lizi (邵力子), later a founding member of the CCP who resigned in favor of a more moderate role in the Guomindang, reasoned that “the disagreement between socialism and capitalism is only in their *methods* for developing industry and increasing prosperity, not on the question of whether we *should* do that.” A puzzled Shao remonstrated that “even school children know that China can’t stand up without industrializing, we don’t need Mr. Russell to tell us that. Yes, Mr. Russell’s key lesson is that we should develop industry, but furthermore he says that, in developing industry, we must not follow the blueprint of European and American style capitalism.”¹¹² It was again a matter of problems versus “isms,” with Shao taking the side of Li Dazhao in arguing that socialism provides the correct “ism” for solving the problem of industrialization—there was no contradiction between the two.

The May Fourth literature was filling with similar articles and letters to editors intensely discussing the matter. Chen Duxiu would aggregate several of these letters and his own personal correspondence into one long article as the centerpiece of the December 1920 issue of *Xin Qingnian*.¹¹³ Showing a desire on Chen’s part to present Young China with a fair representation, Zhang Dongsun’s views and explanations over the intervening weeks were on prominent display, most of which do not mention Russell, who after all was only one catalyst and not the focus of this debate. However, in a letter on why

111 Chen Wangdao 陈望道: “Ping Dongsun jun de ‘you yi jiaoxun’ 评东荪君的〈又一教训〉”, *Juewu* 《觉悟》1920年11月7日. Also included in “Guanyu shehuizhuyi de taolun”, *Xin Qingnian* 第8卷 第4号, 1920年12月.

112 Shao Lizi 邵力子: “Zai ping Dongsun jun di ‘you yi jiaoxun’ 再评东荪君底〈又一教训〉”, *Juewu* 《觉悟》1920年11月8日. Also included in “Guanyu shehuizhuyi de taolun”, *Xin Qingnian* 第8卷 第4号, 1920年12月.

113 Chen Duxiu 陈独秀: “Guanyu shehuizhuyi de taolun 关于社会主义的讨论”, *Xin Qingnian* 《新青年》1920年第8卷 第4期, 1920年12月.

“everyone needs to bear in mind Mr. Russell’s advice,”¹¹⁴ Zhang did seek to remind his readers of Bertrand Russell’s credibility. He noted Russell’s scholarship and upright character, “admirable to the 120th part,” and how regarding China’s problems (implying a contrast) “he insistently refrained from any loose talk about matters with which he wasn’t well informed.” Bertrand Russell “spurned the luxury hotels,¹¹⁵ feared extravagant social ‘to-do’s’ (应酬), and avoided giving superficial advice ... he only speaks when his views are well thought out. He doesn’t want to fob off the Chinese with conventional wisdom.” Zhang noted how the Bolsheviks could not buy Russell off with their lavish hosting—he’s too much the scholar to fall for that—so he’s not going to change with the wind based on somebody else’s agenda; in other words, Russell does not represent some capitalist conspiracy in China, but only himself. Yes, he did say China should first develop education, and then raise its prosperity through industrialization, while in the meantime socialism can be temporarily delayed, but Zhang was “in total agreement” with these two priorities and saw the greater danger not in the potential abandonment of socialism, but in its principles being enforced too early. “But, if the value of this ‘sub-optimal theory’ (卑之无甚高论) is in its practicality, then if it isn’t implemented, how will it differ from the optimal theory? Everyone needs to bear in mind Mr. Russell’s words and work to bring these objectives about.”

114 Zhang Dongsun 张东荪: “Dajia xu qiejì Luosu xiansheng gei women de zhonggao 大家须切记罗素先生给我们的忠告”, In “Guanyu shehuizhuyi de taolun 关于社会主义的讨论”, *Xin Qingnian* 《新青年》第8卷 第4号, 1920年12月.

115 These luxury hotels were probably the foreign owned hotels Russell was loath to stay in because of his ‘scandalous’ relationship with Dora. In his autobiography, Russell wrote “Changsha was a place without modern hotels, and the missionaries very kindly offered to put us up,” but made it clear that they would have to live separately because they weren’t married. They therefore declined and stayed in a Chinese hotel. “The experience was not altogether pleasant. Armies of bugs walked across the bed all through the night.” In Russell, *Autobiography*, 341.

While many saw nothing but heresy in such words, Chen Duxiu voiced his reservations in a more balanced manner. In his brief reflection on “Isms and Effort,” part of the section that closed each issue of *Xin Qingnian* with his rapid-fire thoughts, Chen likened China to a ship that,

when navigating, needs to have both a direction and human effort. Without effort we can't reach any destination, but if we don't have a direction, then where are we going? I see many young people who only hang “isms” from their lips and don't make any practical effort [as I've often criticized before] ... but now there are those who misunderstand my meaning and want to emphasize practicality without discussing “isms.”

But without a clear direction, vigorous activity risks crashing the ship against the rocks. When it comes to both a guiding “ism” and Young China's tireless effort, “in neither can we be lacking.”¹¹⁶

Chen also took the initiative to write directly to Russell, asking him to weigh in on the controversy while framing his letter in a way that made his own views obvious. Written in the spirit of informing Russell of something he could not be expected to know, Chen explained that “recently, China's capitalist Party organizations have been praising you endlessly for your emphasis that China first needs education, second to develop industry, and in the meantime does not need to promote socialism. Is this truly what you said, or did others misunderstand you? This matter is very important in pointing the way for China's reform. If others are mistaken, it would be best for you to clarify this, so as to avoid confusing the Chinese and making those who are more advanced in their thinking lose faith in you.”¹¹⁷

116 Chen Duxiu 陈独秀: “Sui gan lu: (98) zhuyi yu nuli 随感录: (九八) 主义与努力”, *Xin Qingnian* 《新青年》第8卷 第4期, 1920年12月.

117 Chen Duxiu 陈独秀: “Duxiu zhi Luosu xiansheng di xin 独秀致罗素先生底新”, In “Guanyu shehuizhuyi de taolun 关于社会主义的讨论”, *Xin Qingnian* 《新青年》第8卷 第4号, 1920年12月.

By this point Russell had already been in Beijing for weeks and it is not known whether he read Chen's letter, which was also published in the December issue of *Xin Qingnian*. If he did, he never responded to it, given that Chen hoped to publish his reply in the following issue and Russell certainly would not have objected to this. On August 26, 1954 Russell responded to an inquiry from Tse-tsung Chow, then conducting his PhD research into the period, that he had no memory of Chen's letter, or whether he replied. He also stood by his original views of China over 30 years later but was "interested in what you say about the way that my views were interpreted in China. I can see how they might be used by reactionaries, although this was far from my intention." He indicated to Chow that his own still-valid final words on the topic of China's situation could be found in his Farewell Address (July 6, 1921) and book *The Problem of China* (1922).¹¹⁸

Despite Russell's non-involvement, the discussion continued in the pages of May Fourth's favorite periodicals, again with Russell rarely if ever mentioned by name, as his opinions were not the real concern. In one instance in the January 1921 issue of *Xin Qingnian*, Zhou Fohai (周佛海), another founding member of the CCP who resigned to join the Guomindang, wrote that "ever since Russell arrived to China I've been looking forward to discussing socialism ... who would have guessed that we'd get the opposite result. Ever since Russell uttered his call to 'develop industry and revive education' the

118 Letter from Russell to Tse-tsung Chow, August 26, 1954. See Chow, *The May Fourth Movement*, 238. There are a few instances in Russell's letters later in life of his not remembering what to him may have seemed questions out of left field about minutiae from decades earlier. Russell's full reply to Chow shows that his thoughts were still preoccupied with the current international situation. From Russell's reply to *Shanghai Life* in mid-December (discussed later), there is some evidence to support Russell having seen the letter, and he certainly would not want to wade into this national debate with a direct reply. Rather, his general reply to everything he had experienced thus far could have been his article "First Impressions of China" published in translation on December 3 (also discussed later). Chen Duxiu's letter to Russell was dated November 14. The original is on file at the Bertrand Russell archives at McMaster University, indicating he received it, and Russell lived with his translator who would have instantly recognized its significance.

discussion has turned against socialism.”¹¹⁹ Li Dazhao would echo this sentiment in March 1921, writing “ever since Russell said that ‘China needs to develop its industry’ everyone has been making a big deal about this need. Indeed, China’s economic misfortune is undeniable and industry needs to develop, but that we must employ capitalism to do this is absurd in the extreme.”¹²⁰ In a lesser known, but likely also influential example, the December 1920 issue of the *Communist* (共产党) would comment on its front page that “the Japanese magazine ‘Criticism’ (批评) wrote in their November issue that ‘before Russell comes to Japan, we have no choice but to translate his ideas from the Chinese (支那) press. Thus far Western ideas have been flowing into China via Japan, but by a change of fortune it appears that the inevitable return to our importing culture from China is gradually approaching.’” The *Communist* reflected on this comment by noting that “we clearly recognize that this was only said to provoke Japanese youth, but we Chinese (中国) are ashamed nonetheless! Russell’s visit has been entirely co-opted by Chinese politicians to gain an advantage for their respective parties and has little connection to the intellectual life of China.”¹²¹

However, in spite of this attempt by China’s Communists to minimize the impact of Russell’s words on its audience, his words did help to ignite a polarizing debate that would last well into 1921—the final year of the May Fourth Movement as Tse-tung

119 Zhou Fohai 周佛海: “Shixing shehui zhuyi yu fazhan shiye 实行社会主义与发展实业”, *Xin Qingnian* 《新青年》第8卷 第5号, 1921年1月. Zhou is also well-known for joining Wang Jingwei (汪精卫) in his collaborationist Nanjing government under Japanese control during WWII.

120 Li Dazhao 李大钊: “Shehuizhuyi xia zhi shiye 社会主义下之事业”, *Shuguang* 《曙光》1921年3月. Quoted from Ding, *Luosu yu zhonghua wenhua*, 123.

121 *Gongchandang* 《共产党》1920年12月7日 第2期 第1页. The CNBKSY database writes that this magazine was created in Shanghai in November 1920 and ran for six issues until July 1921. It’s chief editor was Li Da (李达), but all other details were kept secret, including where in Shanghai its printing presses were located. Its circulation peaked at 5,000, which was more than 1,000 less than the peak of the longer running *Russell Monthly*, but one suspects was ultimately more influential.

Chow defined it, after which China transitioned to a period of political action. This would largely coincide with the rise of Sun Yat-sen's Canton regime, which was not a product of this debate. But it also coincided with the decision made by those who until November of 1920 had tended to dwell only on the "isms" of Socialism and Communism that the time was right to make the effort of founding a Communist Party of China, which they did in Shanghai on July 23, 1921.

Russell's Active Period in Beijing, Part I: November and December 1920

Bertrand Russell and Dora Black arrived in Beijing on October 31 and soon would settle in at their *hutong* residence, which they shared with their interpreter Zhao Yuanren. Preparations were underway at Peking University to arrange Russell's teaching schedule and activities related to his visit. Jiang Baili (蒋百里), the military strategist and associate of Liang Qichao, quickly established the Chinese-language *Russell Monthly* (罗素月刊) to print Russell's translated writings, lectures, and other articles about his philosophy. Fu Tong, another of Liang's associates, arranged the Russell Study Group, which unlike the *Russell Monthly* had Russell's direct participation in its few meetings. His lectures were soon arranged as well, with the first lecture he delivered attracting 3,000 people according to the Peking University student newspaper, roughly the size of the entire student body, though *Beida* students only made up one part.¹²² In total, Russell taught five courses during his time at Peking University, with several running at the same time. Lectures for each course were typically once per week for two hours. From November to January he taught "The Problems of Philosophy" (12 lectures), November

¹²² "Ben xiao xinwen 本校新闻", *Beijing Daxue Rikan* 《北京大学日刊》1920年11月8日737期.

to February had “The Analysis of Mind” (15 lectures), and December to March had a theoretical physics course called “The Analysis of Matter” (6 lectures). Finally, two courses cut short because of Russell’s illness were “Science of Social Structure” starting in February (4 of 5 prepared lectures delivered) and “Mathematical Logic” in March (1 of 4 prepared lectures delivered). In between lecturing, Russell continued to deliver the occasional public talk and interact with a variety of individuals, organizations and students.¹²³

While the tension Russell felt about his hectic first two weeks in China soon relaxed, he was still very popular. Timothy Tingfang Lew, a professor of theology at Peking University, described in 1922 how some conservative publishers were surprised by the general sales numbers for Russell’s writings. For example, “when Bertrand Russell was lecturing in Peking, an arrangement was made to take down his lectures verbatim and a special monthly was published, known as *The Russell Monthly*. The first issue was to be 6,000 copies. The publisher undertook the order with reserved distrust, but later on confided to the editor of the monthly that he never dreamed that 6,000 copies were not enough and that further editions would actually be in demand.”¹²⁴ Elsewhere, in an announcement made on November 10, 1920 by Mao’s Cultural Book Society in Hunan, a section on “important books we carry” listed Russell’s *Political Ideals* and *Principles of Social Reconstruction* first, immediately followed by an introduction to Marx’s *Capital* and Dewey’s *Five Major Lectures*, and a few dozen other books.¹²⁵ Russell’s lectures on social philosophy were so eagerly awaited that they were announced in the student

123 In Yuan, Sun and Ren, *Zhongguo dao ziyou zhi lu*, 308-309.

124 Timothy Tingfang Lew, *China To-day: Through Chinese Eyes* (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1922), 31.

125 Schram, *Mao’s Road to Power; Volume I*, 589

newspaper without his consultation, followed quickly by a correction that “because Mr. Russell has just arrived and hasn’t had a chance to investigate social matters, he has postponed ‘Principles of Social Reconstruction’ and will talk on ‘Problems of Philosophy’.”¹²⁶ (The former course name was also chosen for him without his consultation. As can be deduced from the later title “Science of Social Structure,” when the time came he still only felt comfortable taking a more abstract approach.)

After a private meeting with Liang Qichao at Russell’s residence on November 5, Russell was soon formally welcomed by his hosts at a welcome banquet on November 9. Liang greeted Russell as a guest of the Lecture Society, which he and others had founded to “encourage an unrestricted importation of ideas for China’s cultural movement” and to “open our doors wide and welcome all modern theories.” In Liang’s elegant speech one likely sees an instance of what motivated Russell’s remark, mentioned previously, about a “civilized Chinese” person being “the most civilized person in the world.” Particularly memorable must have been Liang’s “request” to Russell “conveyed first through a humorous anecdote.” Liang retold for Russell a story about the Tang-period Daoist “immortal” Lu Chunyang (吕纯阳), who it was said could turn rocks into gold with his finger. Lu once thought he had found a potential disciple of pure heart when his offers of increasing amounts of gold were repeatedly refused, but when Lu finally asked the man “then what is it that you ultimately seek?,” he was disappointed when the man replied, “your finger!” Liang continued, “what is Mr. Russell’s ‘finger’? If he takes his method of understanding a problem and transfers it to us, so that we can use it to those same ends, wouldn’t we all become Second Lu Chunyang’s?” After hearing previous references to

126 “Yuan ting Luosu jiangyan zhe zhuyi 愿听罗素讲演者注意”, *Beijing Daxue Rikan* 《北京大学日刊》1920年11月5日.

himself as a Second Confucius—the “primitive code” giver of China according to Russell—Liang’s words must have been comforting. It is also likely that Liang was assisting Russell by publicly speaking on his behalf in response to concerns voiced during their private introduction four days earlier.

Russell replied that, “having just heard Mr. Liang speak, I am filled with admiration. I am more than willing to transfer my ‘golden touch’ to you all.” Likely encouraged by the atmosphere established by Liang, Russell then decided to partly concede to anticipation on this significant occasion: “my friends, as for the means to improve China, for the moment do not emphasize socialism while China’s resources are still being developed; for the moment start with basic education to increase the knowledge of the common people, and only afterwards adopt socialism. If instead you first attempt to implement socialism or communism in a short period of time, as is being attempted in Russia today, I am afraid that, in the end, your failure will be unavoidable.” As to education, Russell then floated the provocative idea that China’s literacy rate could be greatly improved through transition to a *pinyin* (phonetic) writing system, at least for the broader masses. Russell knew by now that Western methods were what his audience wanted, not praise of the East, and so he commented that use of such a writing system had greatly facilitated the spread of childhood literacy in Europe relative to China. Tempering the unwelcome aspects of his previous, unqualified praise, Russell now compromised, observing how “China responds to the West’s addiction to power by calling for deescalation [implying a contrast with a militarizing Japan]. This is one of

China's excellent points. The Chinese shouldn't cast aside their good points, but regarding the strengths of the West, these shouldn't be disregarded either."¹²⁷

Notable in Russell's speech is how, starting with no preconceptions four weeks earlier, he had by now come to take for granted that socialism, or even communism, was the system universally desired by educated Chinese.¹²⁸ Because of his wartime books he understood that he had been cast in the role of a champion for socialist creeds, and recognized how this must have appeared to conflict with his later writings on Bolshevism. From his October 18th letter to Constance we know he learned soon after his arrival that his negative articles on Russia had already appeared translated in papers across China, and hints about the dissatisfaction with his speeches critical of Bolshevism in Changsha did filter back to him as he would later indicate. When his devotee Zhang Shenfu wrote in early November to regretfully inform him that he was leaving for France, Russell responded on November 10th, with some degree of self-pity, that "I am very sorry to see you are going away so soon. I would have made more attempts to see you, but was persuaded you hated me on account of my criticism of Bolshevism." Despite his strong Communist sympathies, a stunned Zhang could not conceive why Russell would think such a thing, but in fact Russell likely intended it to be a generic comment that conveyed his sense of how poorly he was fitting in, even among those Chinese who could best "accompany him," as Yang Duanliu put it.¹²⁹ The fact that he wrote this to Zhang

127 "Jiangxueshe huanying Luosu zhi shenghui 讲学社欢迎罗素之盛会", *Chenbao* 《晨报》1920年11月10日. In Yuan, Sun and Ren, *Zhongguo dao ziyou zhi lu*, 28-30.

128 This was not true, of course. In fact, Liang Qichao himself wrote that "If we desire to transplant to China the centralized socialism conceived by Marx and put into practice by Lenin, then it, too, I venture to say, because it runs counter to the national character, must fail in the end." Quoted from Joseph R. Levenson, *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and the Mind of Modern China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), 212.

129 Schwartz, *Time for Telling Truth is Running Out*, 134.

Shenfu, “China’s Russell scholar” who in one letter informed him that “I worship you,” also shows that Russell had not yet formulated a clear Who’s Who of China.

As Russell began his two courses on Philosophy and the Mind, he also addressed what must have been an overwhelming demand in Beijing for him to speak on politics and Bolshevism. On November 19 he gave a public lecture on “Bolshevik Thought” at the Women’s High Normal College.¹³⁰ Zhao Yuanren later remembered that “there was so much interest shown by the public that there was an overflow of some 1,500 people who could not get in.”¹³¹ We see in this lecture Russell’s attempt to mollify his detractors by deliberately choosing to focus only on what he saw as the positive aspects of Bolshevism, since “each ideology or organization must have its good and its bad points and certainly cannot be all good or all bad.” He praised Russia’s desire for greater economic equality among people and for raising the social standing of women through its work policies. He also noted that many of the problems Bolshevism was facing were a direct result of international hostility and the blockade.¹³² According to the Chinese transcription, and confirmed in its essentials by Russell’s letter one month later to *Shanghai Life*, he even closed with the remark that “I hope that the civilized and ancient countries of the world will come to assist Russia in its good intentions ... Even more, I hope that all civilized countries will experiment with this great new ideology themselves!” While some, such as an anonymous writer to *Minguo Ribao*, were positively affected by hearing these words from someone who had thus far been “very critical of Bolshevism after coming to

130 Luosu zhe, Ting Qian biji 罗素者, 廷谦笔记: “Buersaiweike de sixiang 布尔塞维克的思想”, *Minguo Ribao* 《民国日报》1920年11月29日.

131 Chao, *Life with Chaos – Vol. II*, 106-107.

132 He ignored Lenin’s unilateral renunciation of Russia’s international debts as a cause of this, presumably because he didn’t view this foreign policy as a necessary part of a socialist system. Thus Russell implies that Russia’s problems may lie in its tactics, not in socialism itself.

China,”¹³³ it does not seem to have helped Russell’s later criticisms of Marxist Socialism be viewed in a more objective light.

On December 3rd Russell would describe for China his “first impressions” in an article translated for *Shenbao*, followed by publication of his original English language version in the *Peking Leader* on December 16. In it, he unapologetically told his Chinese readers first how “struck” he was “to begin with by the great artistic beauty of all that is traditional, and the aesthetic ruin wrought by modern industrialism wherever it has penetrated.” But he had come to learn that this “old beauty no longer has any vitality, and that it can only be preserved by treating the whole country as a museum.” Anyone who does not treat China as a mere “spectacle” would not be “content with this conservative attitude.” Thus it was natural for the Chinese to become impatient when foreigners praise it this way. Instead, the Chinese felt a “tremendous eagerness for ideas, for enlightenment, for guidance,” not so much in the form of facts, but of received wisdom. Because of this intense desire for answers rather than methods “it is impossible not to be surprised by the general belief that a sage must be able to give moral advice by which a nation’s difficulties can be solved.” What China had achieved in twenty years was “quite amazing,” but much remained to be done. Universal education was the most pressing need. As for industrialization, it was important too, but when importing such things from the West “it seems difficult to obtain the good without the bad.” Therefore Russell was “puzzled” as to just what it was he should desire for China. But China would industrialize regardless of what Russell said or thought, and would be profoundly changed like Europe was before it, both for good and for bad, since “there is no reason to suppose that China

133 M. U.: “Du Luosu jiangyan de ganxiang 读罗素讲演的感想”, *Minguo Ribao* 《民国日报》1920年11月30日. In Cao, *Tongwang ziyou zhi lu*, 164.

will prove an exception.” He concluded with a heartfelt statement of gratitude and what would effectively be an apology:

I have been welcomed with a warmth which has surprised and touched me, and have been treated everywhere with a quite extraordinary kindness. It is natural to wish that I could make some return for this kindness in the form of help in China’s problems; but I am impressed by the complexity and difficulty of these problems, and by the impossibility of understanding them when one is a recent arrival ignorant of the Chinese language. So long as this remains the case, anything that I may find to say must continue to suffer from superficiality and ignorance.¹³⁴

If Russell feared he would ultimately have no useful advice to give his Chinese audience, the effort he did make would be useful in helping him to formulate his own thoughts on industrialism’s role in the world. This would culminate in his book *The Prospects of Industrial Civilization* (1923), which was based almost entirely on his “Science of Social Structure” lectures at Peking University. We see its beginnings in the lecture “Industry in Undeveloped Countries,” delivered to the Chinese Social and Political Science Association on December 3.¹³⁵ In this address, Russell conceded that his previous “aesthetic indictment of industrialism is perhaps the least serious,” but found more serious how it forces one to “live a life against instinct,” which leads to a “listless and trivial” populace “in constant search of excitement,” including war. “Russia and

134 Bertrand Russell, “First Impressions of China,” *The Peking Leader*, December 16, 1920. In Rempel and Haslam, *Collected Papers 15*, 248-250. Published in Chinese translation as “Luosu duiyu Zhongguo zhi di yi ganxiang 罗素对于中国之第一感想”, *Shenbao* 《申报》1920年12月3日. In Cao, *Tongwang ziyou zhi lu*, 23-24. Suzanne Ogden cites this as an unpublished document with no date. See Ogden, “The Sage in the Inkpot,” p. 532 (cite 6). Incorrectly viewing this as a sort of private diary entry instead of a public statement broadcast to all Chinese willing and able to read it gives the document a radically different interpretation, and may help account for Ogden’s very unflattering portrayal. In the correct latter case, Russell is entirely and uncharacteristically open with his feelings, expressing his deep thanks, publicly pleading to be given more time, and apologizing for not being able to give his Chinese audience what it so clearly wants. In the former case, Russell appears to be privately confessing to himself that he is essentially a confidence man who got in way over his head and now wishes he could find a way out—but still hopes to hide this fact from the Chinese because of his false pride and an unexpected sense of guilt.

135 Bertrand Russell, “Industry in Undeveloped Countries,” *The Chinese Social and Political Science Review* 5, no. 4 (1920). Printed in Chinese as Luosu zhe, Yang Duanliu yi 罗素者, 杨端六译: “Wei kaifa guo zhi gongye 未开发国之工业”, *Dongfang Zazhi* 《东方杂志》1921年1月10日.

China,” he said, “would do well [from the point of view of its people’s happiness] to remain unindustrial,” but he recognized that “the pressure of the outside world makes it impossible.” The industrialization process also requires militarization as a safeguard, leading to “a strong anti-foreign feeling, which is bound to develop into brutality and imperialism.” As a result, “national communism, even if it existed in every nation, would therefore do very little by itself to bring an end of wars.” Only international government could do that. Turning to China, Russell coolly assessed that “one finds in China a great desire to develop industry without the evils belonging to capitalism in partially developed countries. I am however very doubtful whether it is possible for China to escape these evils ... I do not think there is enough education or enthusiasm or industrial experience in China to make successful communism possible except in dependence upon Russia.” Better, he thought, to “look to America, and in a lesser degree to Great Britain, rather than to Russia” for industrial development, but always “with a view to gradual acquisition of Chinese industry by the Chinese,” and “not forget[ting] the desirability of communism” when the international situation allowed.

On December 14 an article was published in the English-language *Shanghai Life* that was highly critical of Russell’s stance on Russia. This article was soon brought to his attention. Information about *Shanghai Life* is hard to come by, but it seems clear that Russell was unaware he was reading a Moscow-backed vehicle for publishing Bolshevik propaganda to the international community in China.¹³⁶ Being written in English, it certainly was intended to catch Russell’s attention, probably as an effort by the

136 FO 371/5340 F 2971/914/10. The British Foreign Office watched the activities of *Shanghai Life*. Johnson Yuan, one of those who had turned on Russell, also worked for *Shanghai Life* as an English translator. See Danyang Li, “Li Hanjun and the Early Communist Movement in China” (PhD Dissertation: Cardiff University, 2011), 123 n. 258. Also see Johnson Yuan’s two translated articles “Piping Luosu lun Suweiai Eluosi 批评罗素论苏维埃俄罗斯” and “Luosu—yi ge shiwang de youke 罗素：一个失望的游客” in *Xin Qingnian* 《新青年》1920年第8卷第4期。

Bolsheviks to put Russell on notice in some way. The original article appears not to survive, but in Russell's exasperated response to the editor we have several directly quoted excerpts. The Bolsheviks accused Russell of pointing out "mistakes committed by the Russian proletariat" and dismiss him as frivolous because he "came to the conclusion that there is not one peasant communist in Russia" simply because "he questioned two peasants he met [along] his way." They asked why would "an adept of communism and a friend of the Russian people want to come to China on purpose to explain that the organization of communism has no success in Russia and that people are suffering from it?" They remonstrated with him that, instead, "he would have told the Chinese the story of the armed intervention against Russia ... he would point out to his hearers the true reason of the defects in Soviet Russia." He should also have spoken of the "danger that threatens China from capitalism, which means to enslave the labour party by means of the consortium."¹³⁷

Russell, needless to say, denied all this, effectively replying that the writer was "apparently ignorant" of everything he had said and done in China. Furthermore, he protested that "I was invited to lecture on philosophy in the University of Peking, and I came prepared with purely academic lectures ... but when I landed, to my surprise, those who had invited me insisted on my lecturing on social questions, especially Russia." Exposing Russell's own ignorance about this probably well-informed arm of the Russian government, he replied that "you have, I fear, allowed yourself to be misled by the capitalist press, which does not report fairly what is said about Russia." Not seeing willful misrepresentation on the part of *Shanghai Life*, Russell instead noted, by way of

137 The consortium was the name given to an American-led international effort to coordinate money lending to China, which some (including Russell) condemned as intended to more easily obtain foreign control over its domestic affairs. Britain, Japan and France were the other members.

self-justification, that “there was willful misrepresentation in the only report I have seen of my lectures on Russia in Changsha,” which may be leading to this misunderstanding. (It is not clear what report he is referring to, but the article discussed in the following paragraph is one possibility.) To provide further evidence of his good intentions, he enclosed an unidentified article he had recently sent to the Shanghai paper *Sin Wan Pao* (新闻报). Given Russell’s protestations and the evidence he presents to prove that he harbors no ill will towards Russia, it seems the Bolshevik’s article in *Shanghai Life* served its purpose well.¹³⁸

Clearly in a proactive mood, Russell also responded to an editorial published on December 19 in *The Peking Leader* entitled “Bertrand Russell on the Religion of Bolshevism.” He took issue with the paper’s conclusion that “the antithesis of Bolshevism ... [is the doctrine of love] of the Christian religion,” presumably in this instance because the paper took advantage of Russell’s influence to criticize Bolshevism without equally representing his well-known views on Christianity, and hence giving Russell’s implicit endorsement of the ideas in the article. In a response to the editor written on “Christmas Day” and published three days later, Russell countered that “for my part I can see little difference” between the two. Like the Bolsheviks’ with communism, those teachings that are admirable of Christianity were also forgotten by its followers, such as love of one’s enemies and turning the other cheek. The only difference in Russell’s eyes was that Christianity has had 1,927 years to try to regenerate the world, whereas Bolshevism has had just three. Hence they are in different stages of development: “People by this time have nearly forgotten that Christianity was once in

138 Letter from Russell to Editor of “Shanghai Life,” December 21, 1920. In Rempel and Haslam, *Collected Papers 15*, 214-215. Considering that the article was written in English, I presume this was its main objective. I later argue the *Sin Wan Pao* article was the English article “Communist Ideals.”

earnest and that the early Christians made a serious effort to practice communism.” For a brief moment in December 1920, at least, Bertrand Russell was intent on reclaiming his public image from the media.¹³⁹

Russell was disappointed with the reception of his views among China’s intellectual leaders and opinion-makers, but by far the greatest disappointment Russell would feel, at least initially, was with the Bolshevik-mad Peking University students that set off the May Fourth movement. (This feeling was to a certain extent mutual.) There seem to be only a few anecdotes that help us understand Russell’s disappointment with Peking University’s students outside of his own private letters, which anyhow were not written with the intention of justifying his opinions. One student from nearby Tsinghua University, Mei Yibao (梅贻宝), who was present at Russell’s second lecture on the “Problems of Philosophy” (which the previous week had attracted 3,000) recalled in 1982—likely with exaggeration for effect—that “before his lecture, the entire hall was packed, even in the aisles and on the window sills. Russell and his interpreter Zhao Yuanren entered together to a thunderous applause. Mr. Russell began with a very abstract analysis of materialism. After about ten minutes only half the audience remained. Reaching a critical juncture in the discussion, Russell asked rhetorically: ‘How can we say we know that underneath this table covering is a table?’ Hearing this, quite a few more got up and left, leaving only about 20 or 30 people.” Mei concluded that “we can see from this that only a few students could understand Russell’s philosophy at that time. Most were just

139 Letter from Russell to Editor of *Peking Leader*, December 25, 1920. In Rempel and Haslam, *Collected Papers* 15, 216-217.

coming to see a big name.”¹⁴⁰ This conclusion, of course, would have been drawn by Bertrand Russell as well.

However, Russell was not looking for a large audience and knew that his theoretical philosophy could only be appreciated by a few no matter where he traveled. A small, devoted number of students would have completely satisfied him; after all, in 1914 he had liked his twelve students at Harvard so much that he jokingly declared their impression was “good enough to moderate any future diatribes on [the] U.S.”¹⁴¹ But with the Russell Study Group, a seminar class organized at Russell’s request “for the better students,” we see that he was not going to repeat his Harvard experience.

One person who was an attendee, but not identified as a student, described the first three meetings in early 1921 for the magazine *Gaizao* under the pseudonym Zhi Chang (质厂).¹⁴² He writes how the study group began in Russell’s third week and was split into English and Chinese language sections, with Fu Tong and Zhao Yuanren assisting. As reconstructed with minimal commentary, at the welcome ceremony one participant likely on the faculty addressed the students with what was intended to be a compliment of Russell, but was actually the inauspicious declaration that “our honored guest refers to himself as a philosopher of the theory of neutral monism, which ties together idealism and materialism, and uses scientific methods to describe philosophical principles. This is precisely in harmony with the philosophy of Confucius. Confucius says: ‘There is a single thread running through my words,’ which makes clear that final

140 Quoted from Ding, *Luosu yu zhonghua wenhua*, 189.

141 Forte, “Russell’s Letters to Flexner and Donnelly,” 230. One of those students was the poet T. S. Eliot, who would become a close friend of Russell’s.

142 Zhi Chang 质厂: “Luosu (Russell) xueshuo yanjiu yui Yingwen bu ji shi 罗素 (Russell) 学说研究会英文部纪事”, *Gaizao* 《改造》第3卷 第6期.

truth comes only after investigation. He also says: ‘knowledge comes from investigation, first investigate then know the cause.’¹⁴³ From this we can see the emphasis Confucius placed on analysis throughout his teachings. The works of Mr. Russell, though not by design, are compatible with those of Confucius. China should hold Russell in the same high regard in which we hold Confucius.”

To this Russell replied, with a nod to Liang Qichao’s welcome speech: “In reference to monism, many philosophers throughout the ages have advocated this philosophy. Only their methods have differed. This study group will emphasize methods, not conclusions. Once, when I was an instructor of mathematics, I had a student who solved problems of algebra in such a way that, though his answers were all correct, his methods were wrong. Even with his correct answers I did not consider him as possessing any knowledge.” Though Russell was probably worried, given the setting this comparison with Confucius was likely not made by a reactionary set on protecting a Confucian heritage against radical novelties. Instead the person may have intended to argue why such novelties were not radical, but actually compatible with China’s heritage. Or the person could simply have been seeking to ingratiate himself with Russell, and, reflecting an education ingrained from childhood, viewed his statement as the highest possible flattery. Either way, in these remarks opening the Russell Study Group we see that not all comparisons of Russell to Confucius were necessarily due to cultural conservatism.¹⁴⁴

143 These two quotes are “吾道一以贯之” and “致知在格物，物格而后知致”.

144 It’s not clear who made this comment, but it almost certainly wasn’t Zhao Yuanren. It is possible that it was Fu Tong because in Fu’s later debate with Zhang Dongsun after Russell’s Farewell Address (discussed later) he quotes Confucius (“子曰”) several times in Russell’s defense. This is surprising since Fu should have been familiar with Russell’s views about this.

Zhi continued to describe the dispiriting sequence of events that followed in the coming weeks.¹⁴⁵ Before closing the welcome meeting, Russell indicated four discussion questions posted about his course “Analysis of Mind,” which this seminar would be based on, suggesting that the students respond to at least one in under 3,000 words. These questions were published on December 9th in the student newspaper *Peking University Daily* (北京大学日刊).¹⁴⁶ He noted that those who could answer in English could join the English group, but either way requested the essays be submitted directly to him before the meeting so that all could discuss their answers with him at length.

The first English meeting saw ten participants, of which only four had prepared any answer to Russell’s questions. Russell began by devoting time to each student, requiring some interaction even if only to elicit a question, before moving on. Those who responded in advance to his posted questions then stayed for further discussion. The second meeting saw seven participants, of which only two had responded to the new set of questions. Only three came to the third meeting, which Zhi attributed to the end of the semester and apologized to Russell, saying that Analysis of Mind must only be a popular topic with the philosophy majors, who he conjectured were all choosing the Chinese language seminar. He assured Russell that interest would be much greater when the topic turned to Analysis of Matter. This article appears to have been written before the fourth meeting. Zhi’s retelling helps shed some light on Russell’s pessimistic letters to be

145 His recollection applies to the English meetings, but considering that Russell set both agendas and that language does not appear to have been a determining factor, was likely also a property of the Chinese meetings.

146 “Yanjiu Luosu xueshuo zhe zhuyi 研究罗素学说者注意”, *Beijing Daxue Rikan* 《北京大学日刊》1920年12月9日. The questions, which were printed in English, are: (1) Examine the analysis of ideas into act, content, and object, by the help of illustrations of your own. (2) What is your opinion of James’s rejection of “consciousness”? (3) Give illustrations for or against the view that thought is always expressed in action. (4) What is an “unconscious” desire and how can its existence be discovered?

discussed later. It also helps us read between the lines of his later description for Western readers, where he simply acknowledged that the students in the study group were more interested in social questions, and then dismissed the seriousness of most of them for “taking the view that China could and ought to become communist tomorrow.”¹⁴⁷

One of those who dropped out after the first meeting wrote to Zhao Yuanren requesting his message be relayed to Russell. Apparently not in attendance at the welcome banquet, nor a regular reader of the student newspaper, he explained to Zhao that after the first session “I realized his research class was strictly limited to studying his technical philosophy, which disappointed me.” The student then “[took] the liberty to request permission not to attend future meetings,” explaining that “this is not necessarily because I am intimidated by these problems, but because I have virtually no foundation or interest in technical philosophy.”¹⁴⁸ To Russell’s credit, he fully understood the views of such students, although he seems not have made peace with it until at least after the new year. In February 1922 he would write an article at the request of The Chinese Students’ Alliance in the United States in which he remarked that, “when I was lecturing on philosophy in Peking, I was painfully conscious that the knowledge I had to give was far less valuable than what could be given by (say) a mining engineer or a man intimately acquainted with the iron and steel industry. Such men ought, in my opinion, to be induced to come to China and to impart their knowledge to those who would make practical use

147 Bertrand Russell, “Sketches of Modern China: II. – Chinese Ethics,” *Nation & Athenaeum*, December 10, 1921. His complete comments appear to be more kind, but I think should be read with this dismissive tone given the context. He put a positive face on the meetings by saying that “the pupils asked questions and discussed our answers with great keenness and perfect candor.” He also acknowledged that “after spending some time on problems of pure philosophy, we began to consider social questions, which interested them far more.”

148 Letter from Coker Chen to Zhao Yuanren, December 10, 1920. Quoted from Feng, *Luosu yu zhongguo*, 201.

of it.”¹⁴⁹ While such visitors would not have satisfied the students Russell was interacting with any better, he did appreciate that his Western preoccupation with idle thought was a luxury that could not satisfy China’s needs at that time.

Turning now to Russell’s private letters, we see that his first two months in Beijing were a period of steadily increasing disappointment and frustration, certainly with Chinese expectations but perhaps also with his own ineffectiveness. He appears to have hit bottom in the process of reading and responding to *Shanghai Life*. To Constance he described the students as being for the most part “stupid,” repeating this to his friend Clifford Allen, adding that “most of them are Bolsheviks, but they don’t know what that means.” To Ottoline he wrote that most of his work was “very futile,” involving a great deal of lecturing “to students who are eager and enthusiastic, but ignorant and untrained and lazy, expecting knowledge to be pumped into them without effort on their part.” To Colette he similarly complained that “the pupils I get are incurably lazy and soft.”¹⁵⁰ These harsh observations could be dismissed as crankiness if Russell himself had treated his sabbatical as a vacation, but in addition to his own effort, one can also read between the lines of his later writings to see how he must have tried unsuccessfully to motivate more effort from his students. In 1922 he would recall that “once I thought that the students to whom I was lecturing were not as industrious as they might be, and I told them so in just the same words that I should have used to English students in the same

149 Bertrand Russell, “Reconstruction in China,” *Chinese Student’s Monthly*, February 17, 1922.

150 Letters from Russell to Constance Malleson, December 3, 1920; from Russell to Clifford Allen, December 13, 1920; from Russell to Ottoline Morrell, December 17, 1920; from Russell to Colette O’Neil, December 24, 1920.

circumstances.”¹⁵¹ As for their opinions of Russell, John Dewey observed that his “criticisms of Bolshevism rather weakened the attachment of the students.”¹⁵²

One silver lining was the “the common people [who] are the best,” because they are “good-natured children, full of laughter, physically tough, and mentally less effete.” Foreshadowing Mao, Russell would “feel as if [the peasants] would be quite good material for education.”¹⁵³ But as for the intellectual rigor of Peking University’s students? Dewey would write how he and Russell had been urged to accept an invitation to speak on religion because “[the students] wanted to get the question settled while Russell and I were in the country.” Although “it wasn’t all as bad as this, [it] in a way was typical.” Dewey would elaborate that “Russell gave out an interview in which he remarked that in the Western world no one had any faith any longer in the ‘wise men’ but China was still in the stage where it believed that a wise man could come along and settle its difficulties and questions” for them.¹⁵⁴

Russell’s disillusionment was not exclusive to Chinese students, as these same letters show. While it’s not clear what other disappointing personal interactions he had in Beijing, he did express dismay at the nonexistent response of the “corrupt” Beijing government to the North China Famine that was then in the process of killing half a

151 Bertrand Russell, *The Problem of China* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1922), 205. Russell tells this story in a chapter on “The Chinese Character” according to a typical pattern where he first makes a sincerely-felt criticism in order to demonstrate even-handedness, but also to ease the insinuation of a potentially controversial idea. He continues “But I soon found I was making a mistake. They all laughed uneasily, which surprised me until I saw the reason. Chinese life, even among the most modernized, is far more polite than anything to which we are accustomed. This, of course, interferes with efficiency, and also (what is more serious) with sincerity and truth in personal relations. If I were Chinese, I should wish to see it mitigated. But to those who suffer from the brutalities of the West, Chinese urbanity is very restful.”

152 Letter from John Dewey to Albert C. Barnes, December 5, 1920. Quoted from Wang, *John Dewey in China*, 27.

153 Letter from Russell to Colette O’Neil, December 24, 1920. Russell would use the term ‘children’ to describe his affection for Russian peasants as well.

154 Letter from Dewey to Barnes, December 5, 1920. In Wang, *John Dewey in China*, 25.

million Chinese, observing that “the Chinese don’t care; whatever is being done for relief is European or American.” While the peasants were starving, he said, “the intellectuals prate of socialism or communism, pretend to be very advanced, and sit with folded hands enjoying inherited wealth.” In general, he found the Chinese “exceedingly cordial ... but one remains on terms of politeness—they are hard to get to know well. I find there are very few whom I can like. They say they are socialists but complain of foreigners for over-paying the coolies.” Seeking a second opinion, he verified that “the Deweys, who have been here over a year, are utterly discouraged.”¹⁵⁵

Russell was soon finding Chinese society itself to be depressing, comparing China to the decaying late Roman empire.¹⁵⁶ He would write to Fu Tong regarding The Commercial Press, which had quickly latched onto Russell after he arrived, to inquire why his books were being translated, published and sold by them without his knowledge, let alone permission.¹⁵⁷ As with *Shanghai Life*, the “Second Confucius” label and other incidents, he was again frustrated by the lack of control he had over his own identity in China. More seriously, he came to despise the indifference of the Chinese government and perhaps many of its people as well. Two years later, when he was a public champion for China, he would still write of “Chinese callousness,” which by then he would justify as being mainly “due to perception of the vastness of the problems involved.” And yet he would note that “there remains a residue which cannot be so explained. If a dog is run

155 Letters from Russell to Constance Malleon, December 3, 1920; Russell to Clifford Allen, December 13, 1920; Russell to Ottoline Morrell, December 17, 1920; Russell to Colette O’Neil, December 24, 1920.

156 Letter from Russell to Constance Malleon, December 15, 1920.

157 Letter from Russell to Pershing T. Fu, December 1920 (date uncertain). The fact that he wrote Peking University’s Fu Tong also may show a limited comfort zone. He apparently felt Fu, who it seems had no formal connection to The Commercial Press, could better handle an issue that Russell would be comfortable handling directly in the West. After all, Russell had already had personal correspondence with The Commercial Press by this time, which also owned *Dongfang Zazhi*.

over by an automobile and seriously hurt, nine out of ten passers-by will stop to laugh at the poor brute's howls. The spectacle of suffering does not of itself rouse any sympathetic pain in the average Chinaman; in fact, he seems to find it mildly agreeable."¹⁵⁸ During his least charitable period of December 1920, he would simply and most uncharacteristically write "I think 50 years of foreign domination is the only hope."¹⁵⁹

Finally, Russell would become depressed with the world every time his international mail arrived—"a blast of insanity." Expressing about Europe's political uprisings a fear he would hint at about a future industrial China, he concluded that "people seem good while they are oppressed, but they only wish to become oppressors in their turn: life is nothing but a competition to be the criminal rather than the victim." As during the war, Russell was again wishing to escape, this time to a Buddhist monastery in the hills of West Lake to study Einstein.¹⁶⁰

Russell's Active Period in Beijing, Part II: January to March 1921

Bertrand Russell did not come with a plan to change China, but in fall 1920 many Chinese wished for China to be changed by Russell. At first he made half-hearted attempts to satisfy these hopes, but was soon dismayed to find that he and his Chinese audience were only talking past each other. However, Russell would quickly rebound

158 Russell, *The Problem of China*, 210. The relevant expression today is "没办法," see *One Child Nation*, directed by Nanfu Wang and Jialing Zhang (2019; Amazon Studios).

159 Letter from Russell to Clifford Allen, December 13, 1920.

160 Letter from Russell to Ottoline Morrell, December 17, 1920. I conjecture he was thinking of West Lake based on what he wrote about his tourism in China. I consider Russell to have had a similar fear for China because he would write a few times how he didn't think things would be different for China if they (like Japan) followed the West by industrializing and militarizing. I think this is in keeping with his impulse theory and the fact that he thought it was universally applicable. In Russell's mind, Chinese were peaceful because their traditional culture has made their creative impulses more dominant. If China were to go the route of Japan, Russell thought, it would have to radically change its everyday culture in a way that emphasized the possessive impulses more.

from this disappointment (and then nearly die from pneumonia) while he was still in China, and by early 1921 it appears to no longer have been a source of mental strain. Perhaps taking a page from Zhuangzi, rather than persist in any attempt to assume the “management” of China as some had originally hoped, Russell would recognize that by playing the role of “Sage” he was only “tripping people up.”¹⁶¹ Instead, he would internalize his experience in a way that allowed him to appreciate China more deeply by discarding his idealizations, revising his expectations and accepting flaws that he still preferred to those of the Great Powers.¹⁶²

After the new year, Russell accepted more stoically the magnitude of the problems faced by the new world into which he had stepped. Sensing that the prediction he made in October to be able to speak on Chinese affairs come January would not be borne out, Russell wrote to Colette that “I don’t think I shall write on China—it is a complex country, with an old civilization, very hard to fathom.” But he still thought that “in many ways I prefer the Chinese to Europeans—they are less fierce—their faults only injure China, not other nations.” He grew to “like the students,” despite the fact that “they don’t work hard and have not much brains,” because “they are friendly and enthusiastic, and very open-minded” about social issues, among which he would have included topics on religion, gender, marriage, education, labor and population. He still professed to “hate most of the Europeans, because they are mostly diplomats and missionaries, both

161 The reference is to Zhuangzi’s story about Po Lo’s management of horses told in *Roads to Freedom*. Changing his own nature to satisfy public expectations could never be an option for Bertrand Russell.

162 His later writings would often provide examples of what he saw as a Chinese flaw, only to contrast this with a related Western flaw that he saw as being much worse. As a representative example, whereas the previously discussed Chinese indifference to suffering was passive, the indifference of Europe’s population to the suffering inflicted by the Great War was active. This is because the war had the public’s widespread vocal support and willingness to assist with its continuation even after its unexpected brutal nature had become clear. Therefore Russell would view European indifference to suffering—and Europe’s inability to see it as indifference—as being worse.

professionally engaged in trying to deceive the Chinese, with very little success.” Likely recalling England during the war, he now found the lack of government “delightful.” Yes, he confirmed, “all the gloomy things I wrote you the other day are true, but they are only one side of the picture. Chinese soldiers kill a few compatriots, others kill many foreigners, so Chinese soldiers are best.”¹⁶³ Most comforting to Russell was that all the activity around his arrival appeared to be over and everything had turned into mere formality. After three and a half months China’s welcome had faded away.¹⁶⁴

This change deepened in February. He would respond to an inquiry from Ludwig Wittgenstein that “I like China and the Chinese ... they are very kind and nice to me.” He lamented that “all the nations set upon them and say they mustn’t be allowed to enjoy life in their own way,” and regretted that, because of this, “they will be forced to develop an army and navy, to dig up their coal and smelt their iron, whereas what they want to do is to make verses and paint pictures.” Again he took it in stride that “my students are all Bolsheviks, because that is the fashion; they are annoyed with me for not being more of a Bolshevik myself.” But he now came to see more clearly their innocence: “Once in a way I have them to an evening party and they let off fireworks in the courtyard—they like this better than lectures.”¹⁶⁵ He also noted of these coed student parties that “in ordinary Chinese life a woman sees no men except relations, but we ignore that, and so earn the gratitude of the young.” He now saw that, in fact, the “students here are charming people, full of fun,” and took it lightly that they “are all Bolshies, and think me an amiable old fogey, and hopelessly behind the times.” Upon hearing how his criticisms of Bolshevism

163 Letter from Russell to Colette O’Neil, January 6, 1921. He was apparently also feeling a little fatalistic at this time.

164 Letter from Russell to Constance Malleon, January 31, 1921.

165 Letter from Russell to Ludwig Wittgenstein, February 11, 1921.

were being used in Britain, he would echo his wartime lamentation that “I have no home on this planet—China comes nearer to one than any other place I know, because the people are not ferocious.”¹⁶⁶ In this new home, he would spend his free moments walking with Dora along Beijing’s still-standing city walls, and his off days relaxing around the Temple of Heaven (天坛), “the most beautiful building that it has ever been my good fortune to see.”¹⁶⁷ Yet at the same time he was feeling relief because he knew that his current situation was only temporary: “One couldn’t stay [in China] for ever unless one were prepared to retire from the world. It is not here that important things begin.”¹⁶⁸ Despite his preference for China’s comparatively slower pace of life, Russell still wanted to be in the thick of it near London.

This does not mean he was no longer busy, only that he was content to perform his duties and speak his mind on topics of his choosing without concern for the response. In addition to continuing to meet occasionally with his study group and write a regular (paid) article for Japan’s *Kaizo*, he prepared materials for two more lecture courses at Peking University and gave at least two more public lectures. In one of these, delivered to the Philosophical Research Group (哲学研究社) in Beijing on January 6, he discussed religion, a subject on which he had long since felt his views to be fully developed.¹⁶⁹ This

166 Letter from Russell to Elizabeth Russell, February 16, 1921. Russell’s extreme cynicism had not diminished, however. He continued: “It is true that the soldiers occasionally run amok, sack a town and bayonet all who do not instantly deliver up their whole wealth. But this is such a trivial matter compared to what is done by ‘civilized’ nations that it seems not to count. 20 million people are starving in provinces near here, and the Chinese do nothing to relieve them. But they are better than we are, because the famine is not caused deliberately by them, whereas we deliberately cause famines for the pleasure of gloating over dying children.” He is probably referring to the famines in Russia which he blamed on the international blockade. The famine Stalin created in Ukraine was still over a decade away.

167 Russell, *Autobiography*, 344.

168 Letter from Russell to Ottoline Morrell, February 21, 1921.

169 Bertrand Russell, “The Essence and Effect of Religion” (Feng Chongyi and Dong Yu, trans.) In Rempel and Haslam, *Collected Papers 15*, 429-433. Originally published as Tie Yan ji 铁岩记: “Zongjiao

speech would become a source of much fretting among Western missionaries in China, particularly during the initial stages of the anti-Christian movement in 1922, as will be discussed later. In the current context, it is notable for Russell's grouping of "Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, and Marxism" as the four major religions of the world. Russell considers the Chinese people fortunate for not having suffered the horrors of persecution for not conforming to an approved thought system, as was the standard experience in Europe. Instead "Buddhism, Confucianism and other creeds can be believed in simultaneously and each is tolerant of the others." Despite this tolerance, Russell still contrasted all religions with science, which he readily concedes consists of beliefs as well, but with a key difference. When beliefs such as Newton's theory of gravity were challenged by Einstein, Einstein was not "killed" for suggesting new calculations that did not agree with Newton's "after the tenth decimal place." Instead his new theory was verified experimentally to be more accurate at characterizing observed phenomena in crucial, albeit esoteric ways. The scientific belief system was then revised accordingly. Similarly, "if sixty-year-old assumptions are used to uphold Marx's theory as a body of unalterable doctrines, then Marxists are exhibiting a religious attitude," despite their claims to scientific thinking. "When people believe in [something] dogmatically, it becomes a religious belief." Of the world religions, Russell liked Buddhism best, because it is "profound," "almost reasonable," and historically the "least harmful" and "least cruel," but he was not a Buddhist because, like any religion, he thought it substituted subjective sentiment for objective facts.

zhi xinyang 宗教之信仰", *Minguo Ribao* 《民国日报》1921年1月20日. In Yuan, Sun and Ren, *Zhongguo dao ziyou zhi lu*, 217-221. I'm quoting from the English translation in Rempel and Haslam, *Collected Papers* 15.

Some Chinese missionaries would focus heavily on this lecture, but the most anticipated, and by the comparative lack of major reporting perhaps also anti-climactic, event of the new year was by far Russell's lecture series on the "Science of Social Structure."¹⁷⁰ Reading his handwritten preamble, addressed directly to his students, and the only portion preserved in English today, Russell clearly recognized the anticipation for the sagely advice he would give in the upcoming course. While he would in fact take a mostly detached, "scientific" approach to the problem, he knew that he needed to address the elephant in the room, and did so by framing the context for his lectures in a way that challenged his audience's expectations.

In his opening words, Russell declared:

I am a Communist. I believe that Communism, combined with developed industry, is capable of bringing to mankind more happiness and well-being, and a higher development of the arts and sciences, than have hitherto existed in the world. I therefore desire to see the whole world become communistic in its economic structure.

I hold also, what was taught by Karl Marx, that there are scientific laws regulating the development of societies, and that any attempt to ignore these laws is bound to end in failure. Marx taught what his nominal disciples have forgotten, that communism was to be the consummation of industrialism, and did not believe it to be possible otherwise....

If, here in China, a government were to decree communism tomorrow, communism would not result from the decree, because there would be resistances and incapacities in the habits of the people, and because the material conditions in the way of machinery etc. do not exist. The power of governments is strictly limited to what is technically and psychologically possible at any moment in a given population. For success in social reconstruction, it is vitally necessary, not merely to understand the ethical purposes at which we should aim, but also to know the scientific laws determining what is possible....

Russell closed his preamble by repeating, "we must know not only what is good, but also what is possible and what are the means for achieving it."¹⁷¹ In this opening statement,

170 Anti-climactic, for example, because it's not clear from reports what the public response was (if any) or even how many students were in attendance at Russell's classes by this point, although the first lecture of this series probably had very many. Russell's life in China was no longer being minutely detailed in the press.

171 Rempel and Haslam, *Collected Papers 15*, 435. See Plate IV of the same volume for a photocopy of the original handwritten note. Again, in 1920 Russell considered the words Socialist and Communist to express the same thing. Judging by his changes in the 1949 edition of his book on Bolshevism, he would have probably later replaced Communist by Socialist in this statement.

not published in English during his lifetime, we see Russell carefully choosing his words with the previous five months in mind: that communism and developed industry go hand-in-hand, that despite the students' hopes, communism could not be decreed in China "tomorrow," and that, before talking about "social reconstruction," one must understand the conditions under which different ends can arise. Effectively, Russell was calling for more study of problems and less talk of "isms," at least within the lecture halls of Peking University.

Russell intended to deliver ten lectures on the "Science of Social Structure," of which four were delivered before his illness. One additional lecture was completely prepared, allowing for five to be translated into Chinese and published in *The Russell Monthly*.¹⁷² His original notes no longer exist, but while these lectures have not been translated back into English, a comparison of the Chinese text with his book *The Prospects of Industrial Civilization* (1923) shows that his Chinese lectures correspond to chapters 1–4 & 8 with minor modifications.¹⁷³ Thus his missing English lecture notes became the first draft of these chapters, with the remaining five lectures that were not in translatable form likely becoming five more chapters of this 13-chapter book. As is evident in both versions, China is not the primary focus, but rather they are both the product of ideas he began to work out in his December 3rd lecture on "Industry in Undeveloped Countries." Therefore, when the time finally came to lecture on social philosophy at Peking University, Russell's lectures on the "Science of Social Structure"

172 These are reproduced (along with his other lectures at Peking University) in Yuan, Sun and Ren, *Zhongguo dao ziyou zhi lu*, 251-292. They are also reproduced in a youth series. See Qin Yue, ed., 秦悦 (编), *Luosu: huanqi shaonian Zhongguo* 罗素：唤起少年中国 [Russell: Rousing Young China to Action] (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2014).

173 Bertrand Russell, *The Prospects of Industrial Civilization* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1923).

would be notable more in how they reflect China's influence on Russell than for any impact they would have on the Chinese.

Illness, Recovery and Reflection: Russell's Farewell Address, July 1921

On March 14, Bertrand Russell would deliver a lecture on education in Baoding, a city about 100 miles southwest of Beijing. Despite the low temperature in the hall and a nagging cold, he removed his overcoat while he spoke, after which he became increasingly sick and, racing back to Beijing, was diagnosed with pneumonia. He would nearly die in the coming days—being officially declared dead by the Japanese press—only to recover and spend six weeks lying motionless in a German hospital. Bertrand Russell's work in China was effectively over.¹⁷⁴

However, in the period when Russell's activities were coming to an abrupt halt, a critical threshold seems to have been reached for his previous activities to begin attracting more widespread attention. Two weeks before his illness, the *Japan Weekly Chronicle* ("the best weekly paper in the world" according to Russell) reprinted reports from China that

the publication of *Communist Ideals*, by Mr. Bertrand Russell, in the Chinese papers in the Lower Yangtse is being severely criticised. Presumably translations of articles by Mr. Russell are meant. Conservatives are agitating for their prohibition on the ground that they contain Russian Bolshevism ideas and doctrines. Considering that Mr. Russell has condemned Russian Bolshevism as inefficient and impracticable, it seems rather wild criticism to accuse him of being a dangerous Bolshevik.¹⁷⁵

174 Russell, *Autobiography*, 345-347. Dora Russell, *The Tamarisk Tree: My Quest for Liberty and Love* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1975), 133-141. (The story of Bertrand Russell's illness is interesting, but beyond the scope of this thesis.)

175 "Notes of the week" *Japan Weekly Chronicle*, March 3, 1921. Russell's comment about this weekly is in *The Problem of China* and was repeated in other articles.

In fact, this publication was the same letter Russell would later send to the left-leaning *Daily Herald* in Britain, where it would be published on October 19, 1921 under the provided title, “Communist Ideals.” For his own archival purposes, Russell noted on the first page: “Printed in Chinese by the Shanghai communists as a leaflet, which was suppressed by the Government.”¹⁷⁶ Incidentally, this shows the value that Russell’s voice did have for the communists in China, provided his message was correct.

Closer inspection reveals that the leaflet was actually a minor rewriting of his November 19 lecture on “Bolshevik Thought” delivered in Beijing, in which he deliberately chose to focus on the positive aspects of Bolshevism. While this lecture had long since been published in its entirety in the pages of *Minguo Ribao*, it is clear that the effectiveness of these standard forms of news print was not as great as propaganda that was packaged and distributed by highly motivated and well-organized communist cells. The fact that there are slight differences between “Communist Ideals” as published in the *Daily Herald* and the Chinese transcription of his lecture in *Minguo Ribao*—and that Russell authored both—indicates that one of two possibilities is likely: Either 1) he was directly involved in this communist propaganda activity, sending them what he thought was an improved version of his lecture, in which case the December 14th article in *Shanghai Life* must have weighed very heavily on him indeed, or 2) the now-lost *Sin Wan Pao* article that Russell said he was enclosing with his reply to *Shanghai Life* (as evidence of his benign intentions) was in fact the “Communist Ideals” article later published in the *Daily Herald*. Being a foreign mission of Moscow, *Shanghai Life* could have then relayed this article to the appropriate propaganda people for translating,

¹⁷⁶ Bertrand Russell, “Communist Ideals,” *Daily Herald*, October 19, 1921. See Rempel and Haslam, *Collected Papers 15*, 238-241.

repackaging and distribution on the streets under Russell's byline, with word making its way back to Russell in his own March 3rd copy of the *Japan Weekly Chronicle*. Since no correspondence appears to exist indicating that the first case occurred, the second seems more likely.¹⁷⁷

Either way, the effectiveness of propaganda literature versus traditional news print in the eyes of the government was demonstrated by the response of Beijing's foreign office. News about this "foreign office farce" would be confirmed by *Minguo Ribao*, which reported on March 28 that, "after arriving in China, Russell has expressed approval of communism on several occasions," and that, growing concerned, Beijing's government "sought to deport him, but didn't dare to make a move." Instead, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Yan Huiqing (颜惠庆) "personally visited the British envoy and requested that England recall him." The British envoy replied that "Russell also speaks this way publicly in England and even the King of England himself can't do anything about it. So Britain will leave it to the Chinese government to handle matters pertaining to Bertrand Russell while he is in Chinese territory as an invited guest of the Chinese."¹⁷⁸ Clearly it was already apparent to the British Foreign Office that Russell's presence in China was relatively harmless as far as Britain's interests were concerned, and so their previous offer

177 *Sin Wan Pao* solicited an article from Russell on a topic of his choosing, claiming in its invitation to be "the most influential [paper] in China with the largest circulation and read by all classes." See *Collected Papers 15*, 527. *Collected Papers 15* also notes that the article Russell sent to *Sin Wan Pao* has not been identified (page 527). If Russell chose to send "Communist Ideals," the paper may have ended up rejecting it as being too pro-Bolshevik for its target audience. Incidentally, assuming Russell took *Sin Wan Pao's* claims at face value, his choice of "Communist Ideals" would show a clear desire on his part to change China's public perception of himself as "anti-Bolshevik" and therefore "anti-Communist." It also may show his belief that the majority of educated Chinese were sympathetic to Russia if he sent "Communist Ideals" to the publication with the "largest circulation" under the assumption they would be willing to print it.

178 "Beiting jing yu quzhu Luosu: waijiaobu zhi da xiaohua 北庭竟欲驱逐罗素: 外交部之大笑话", *Minguo Ribao* 《民国日报》1921年3月28日. In Cao, *Tongwang ziyou zhi lu*, 25.

to act against Russell on Beijing's formal request for "Act 3: printing seditious matter" was no longer on the table.

The ineffective Beijing government had only created fuel for its own mocking, but other writers saw the bigger picture in Russell's visit. In a reply to the above report published days later in the same paper, the pseudonymous Han Wei (汉胃) sadly observed that it didn't look like Russell would survive his illness and agreed that the send-off he was receiving in China was unfortunate. But "Russell's misfortune wasn't in having the Beijing government view him as a propagator of dangerous thoughts and thus initiate a ham-handed effort get him expelled. His misfortune was in his being co-opted by those insufferable Chinese who quoted his statements about Chinese industry out of context in order to represent him as an opponent of socialism and supporter of capitalism. In fact, those who misrepresented him and those who feared him were of the same mind; they only differed in the skill of their tactics."¹⁷⁹

Foreign organizations would also begin to take greater notice of the impact of Russell's activities. An editorial published in the March edition of the *Chinese Recorder*, a missionary journal, noted that "Mr. Bertrand Russell, now visiting China, is more outspoken in his criticism of Christianity possibly than any contemporaneous visitor to China. A lecture by him in which he attacked Christianity was published in the *China Times* [*Shishi Xinbao*] of January 14, 1921."¹⁸⁰ The editorial would observe that "he is really criticizing Christianity in pragmatic terms and any reply to his criticisms must be couched in somewhat similar terms." The writer concluded that there was a "crying need

179 Han Wei 汉胃: "Luosu de buxing 罗素的不幸", *Minguo Ribao* 《民国日报》, 1921年4月1日. In Cao, *Tongwang ziyou zhi lu*, 26.

180 It should be noted that the missionary community differed from the business community in its fluency in Chinese and a much deeper understanding of Chinese culture, conditions and events.

for Christian educators and philosophers to come to China to give a fuller presentation of the truth.”¹⁸¹ A subsequent quarterly issue of “Christian Literature” would contain a pamphlet by Rev. Dr. Donald MacGillivray on “China’s intellectual ferment” that echoed this need. In particular, MacGillivray, who first arrived in China in 1888 and lived through the Boxer Uprising, saw the need to combat the potential ill effects of four especially heinous opinions on religion propagated by Russell. Though embarrassed to reproduce these four ideas in Christian print, he did so to “show the great need for Christian literature in China to counteract such mischievous utterances.”¹⁸² Dora had already written her mother on January 16, only ten days after Russell’s lecture on religion, to remark on the immediate response on the ground, observing that “all the missionaries got into a great state and are now making speeches all over the place in reply.”¹⁸³ Student centers were being reserved by missionaries for monthly Christian meetings in an effort to directly counteract Russell.¹⁸⁴ By spring the following year, organized missionary activity across China would coalesce around these objectives, with unexpected results coming soon thereafter, as discussed later.

The British *North China Herald*, based in Shanghai and China’s most influential foreign-run newspaper, was also beginning to put a greater spotlight on those it saw as opponents to British interests in China, with the aim of counteracting their influence.

181 Editorial, *Chinese Recorder* 52, no. 3 (March 1921): 155-56.

182 “Intellectual Ferment,” *North China Herald*, July 16, 1921. Russell’s paraphrased ideas were: (1) Religion is responsible for the death of multitudes of people. (2) Religion is too conservative and sacrifices too much for whatever positive ends it can provide. (3) Religion has unchanging creeds, while scientific belief grows and evolves with increasing knowledge. (4) Religion guides life based on only a few articles of belief that are sustained by emotional feeling and clever rhetoric.

183 Russell, *The Tamarisk Tree*, 125.

184 Evan N. Dawley, “Changing Minds: American Missionaries, Chinese Intellectuals, and Cultural Internationalism, 1919-1921,” *Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 12, no. 1-2 (Spring-Summer 2003): 15.

(This effort would continue deep into the 1920s with increasing vitriol as the British pulled out of China.) In May, they wrote that “the influence exerted by [Russell and Dewey] has been very great. Their lectures have been reported *in extenso* in the press and have been read with avidity by readers everywhere.” Their conclusion: Britain needs its own university in China, so the Chinese are not only hearing from the likes of Bertrand Russell. “Were such a university as we have advocated in existence, the steadying influence of its teaching would be of incalculable advantage to China at this juncture.” Written with the primary aim of belittling Young China generally, which along with Sun Yat-sen the paper held in utter contempt, the article concluded that “we could wish that the young men in Chinese universities, already intoxicated with the new wine of radical thought, had an opportunity of listening to men whose views on life were more reliable than the heady socialism beloved of Bertrand Russell.”¹⁸⁵

Regarding Sun Yat-sen’s fast rising Guomindang regime based in Guangzhou, then called Canton (I will use “Guangzhou” only when geography is the primary focus), hints of an opportunity to impact China there were conveyed in a letter from *New York Tribune* correspondent Nathaniel Peffer, received by Russell as he lay near death. Russell was an admirer of Sun, lamenting in his autobiography that his hectic schedule after landing in Shanghai had foiled an opportunity to accept Sun’s invitation to a private

185 “New Wine in Old Bottles (May 9),” *North China Herald*, May 14, 1921. Showing their ignorance of Russell’s words in China, the article continues in its typically pompous and cheeky tone (that would fit in very well with much of the news media even 100 years later): “It is well to remember that in ethics, as in mathematics, certain ascertained axioms have to be assumed before further progress is possible. The mariner with a compass has a fixed point by which to guide his course; but Chinese youth has launched itself on a sea of speculation, and mistakes the buoyant motion of the waves for the ship’s progress through the water.” It is worth noting that Russell made this same point in his preamble to “Science of Social Structure,” but was coming from a very different place. Chen Duxiu also used a similar (but not identical) ship analogy in “Isms and Effort.” The *North China Herald* believed Young China could only be said to have learned this principle when it came to its senses and agreed with the correctness of all British policy and actions in China.

dinner.¹⁸⁶ The center of gravity in China was rapidly shifting from Beijing to Guangzhou; Peffer thought that “more was happening” in the south, and believed Russell would find the political atmosphere of Guangzhou more interesting to visit. Responding to concerns raised previously by Russell, Peffer’s letter, as Suzanne Ogden summarizes it, “attempted to assuage Russell’s fears that he would not be welcome in Canton.” On the contrary, “all the heads of the southern government, including Sun Yat-sen, Wu-fang, [Tang Shaoyi, 唐绍仪] and [Chen Jiongming, 陈炯明] had personally indicated to him their enthusiasm for Russell’s visiting Canton. Lin Wen-p’eng apparently read Russell’s *Roads to Freedom* in Chinese translation. [Chen Jiongming], a ‘self-renounced tuchun’ (warlord), spoke of a system of economic rule that coincided with Russell’s own ideas: the economy of the people would be nationalized and controlled by ‘unselfish’ men for the benefit of the people, with the profits to be used for public works, education and benevolent purposes.”¹⁸⁷ Therefore, although Russell’s writings had some small effect on the thinking of South China’s leaders—men with power, in stark contrast to his audience thus far—he lost an opportunity to visit these men personally. Such a tour would have been likely, considering that John Dewey made the trip to South China and returned to Beijing to lecture on his visit in June 1921.

Rather than risk his recovery on a visit to South China, Russell would instead look forward to his departure, particularly after learning that Dora was pregnant. On April 28 he wrote to Ottoline that he had already tired of North China even before falling ill, and his thoughts were on speeding home. He would repeat this sentiment to Constance on

186 Russell, *Autobiography*, 341.

187 Letter from Nathaniel Peffer to Russell, March 22, 1921. Quoted from Ogden, “Sage in the Inkpot,” 539.

May 7, adding, after receiving an offer to extend his stay through a second year as Dewey did, that, no matter what, he did not want to stay in China. Dora later recalled “talk of asking him to stay another year, but he felt that his subject and style of teaching were not suited to what seemed to him elementary work.”¹⁸⁸ But he did have strong regrets, telling Clifford Allen that “my work here, of course, was stopped dead by my illness, which I regret very much as I was just getting into real touch with the students, who are all Bolsheviks” and among whom “several have [now] gone to Moscow.”¹⁸⁹ Russell was also happy in general just to be alive, wryly joking that “I have missed much by not dying here, as the Chinese were going to have given me a terrific funeral in Central Park, and then bury me in an island in the Western Lake, where the greatest poets and emperors lived, died, and were buried. Probably I should have become a God. What an opportunity missed!”¹⁹⁰

It is unclear how Russell spent his remaining healthy month or two in China, but his public activities were over—a picture of him with Kagawa Toyohiko in Japan that July hints that the physical toll was large. Likely he continued to meet privately with individuals at a much reduced rate, and was busy organizing the lecture materials for his course “Analysis of Mind,” much of which he had prepared before arriving, into the final draft of a book of the same name that would be published almost immediately upon his

188 Russell, *The Tamarisk Tree*, 125.

189 Letter from Russell to Ottoline Morrell, April 28, 1921. Letter from Russell to Constance Malleson, May 7, 1921. Both referenced in Feng, *Luosu yu zhongguo*, 112. Letter from Russell to Clifford Allen, June 2, 1921.

190 Letter from Russell to Ottoline Morrell, May 14, 1921. To amplify the impact of its following sentence, Russell’s phrase “lived, died, and were buried” probably intentionally echoes the reference to Jesus in many Christian professions of faith, including the Book of Common Prayer of the Church of England.

return to England.¹⁹¹ He also needed to prepare his Farewell Lecture for July 6, which, given the occasion, he knew would only be appropriate to use for addressing head on those problems of China's reconstruction that he had been trying to avoid since his arrival. Seeking a title suitable to the occasion, and in line with his own past writings that had resonated so much with the Chinese, Russell called his final lecture "China's Road to Freedom."¹⁹²

It is obvious that Russell put much time and careful thought into "China's Road to Freedom," as it directly touches on virtually every topic of relevance to his visit, each in a meaningful and insightful way, while addressing the larger issue in a way not easily disentangled into isolated parts. To review everything of value to the discussion in this chapter, and of relevance to understanding Russell's later writings on China, would be to reproduce the speech in its entirety. As Russell himself told the audience, by way of analogy to the mathematical proof system, the different aspects of his argument were being presented as "necessary, but not sufficient," meaning he urged China to consider the whole of his speech if they wished to reach the destination of "freedom" along the road he was attempting to lay out for them. (And he made it clear that he did not have a "Bolshevik's certainty" that China's freedom would be assured, but rather believed that his prescriptions would increase its probability—China clearly had to do *something* different in its current predicament.)

191 Bertrand Russell, *The Analysis of Mind* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1921). Russell viewed this as the major, cutting-edge course he could offer at Peking University. It also had the most lectures and a dedicated, and as we've seen unproductive, Russell Study Group built around it partly intended to help Russell spot any issues with his ideas.

192 Rempel and Haslam, *Collected Papers 15*, 261-267. The original English lecture was published in *Peking Leader* on July 7, 1921. It was published several places in Chinese translation, for example in *Minguo Ribao* 《民国日报》1921年7月11日 and *Dongfang Zazhi* 《东方杂志》第18卷第13期.

The major change in Russell's thinking over the intervening months was his belief now that China's political problem was of primary importance and that State Socialism was the answer. Mass education was still of primary *value*, but impossible to implement without a well-functioning, unified government. Industry was still necessary to increase prosperity, but profits would only fund the lifestyles of corrupt leaders and their armies in the absence of good government. The more liberal, democratic forms of socialism that Russell preferred were only applicable to industrially developed countries like Britain with an informed voting public. Therefore, Socialism, which was necessary to ensure an equitable development and distribution of China's resources, would have to be implemented under a strong State, which was the only dependable means for seeing this through given China's placid, agricultural society.

Who was to run the State and implement these reforms internally while warding off hostile external pressures? Russell saw active patriotism as utterly lacking in the masses of China, due to its deeply ingrained historical sense of international security, and a love of country could not be rapidly diffused among the mass of people, "but this is by no means necessary for the beginning of regeneration. *Ten thousand resolute men*, inspired by an ideal and willing to risk their lives, could acquire control of the government, regenerate Chinese institutions, and institute an industrial development which should be free from the evils associated with capitalism in the West." These men should be "honest, energetic and intelligent," and "incapable of corruption." The necessary assumption and wielding of their power would mean that "China cannot for

many years to come take the form of democracy after the Western model.” In short, Russell saw a Bolshevik-style takeover as the only way forward for China.¹⁹³

But the Bolsheviks, “as is natural to pioneers,” have made mistakes that China can learn from. For example, “a system which gives all power to the communist party seems to its members quite satisfactory, and they are in no hurry to pave the way for a greater freedom and a wider distribution of power.” After almost four years it was already clear that the Russian experiment was succumbing to this temptation, and that “all their talk against democracy and in favour of the dictatorship of what they call the proletariat is, in essence, merely camouflage for their love of power.” In China, “so far as I am able to observe,” this should not be a concern, but rather “love of money” would be the greater danger were China to “attempt a non-capitalistic development of industry.” As with the Russians, Bertrand Russell did not think the Chinese temperament such that a future Chinese State Socialist government would fall under the corrupting influences of both power and money.

The “ethical difficulties” of China’s road forward, as Russell was paving it for them, were “so great that I cannot feel any confidence in its practicability.” The essential thing, as far as China’s inevitable industrialization was concerned, was to see to it that “industry is the servant of man, not his master.” Russell closed with his observation that

China has many of the qualities required for realizing this ideal, particularly the artistic sense and the capacity for civilized enjoyment without which leisure has little value. These qualities make it

193 *Italics added.* This did not mean he thought it would necessarily be violent, repressive or even overly coercive. In choosing the arbitrary number 10,000, Russell may have had in mind the Indian Civil Service, which consisted of a little over 1,000 British members and governed a total population roughly 3/4 the size of China’s. Russell would never explicitly state this given his hatred for British imperialism, but as India was generally stable and its conditions were similar to China’s, he knew it could be done in principle. The Bolsheviks needed well over 100,000 members to rule a population just 1/5 the size of China’s to their own satisfaction. Russell may have had these relative scales in mind—he would have had access to the information and liked working with numbers.

possible to hope that China may lead the world in the next stage of development, and give back to the restless West something of that inner calm without which we must perish in frantic madness.

China Internalizes Russell's Visit and Moves Forward, 1921-1922 and Later

In the days following Russell's Farewell Address he and Dora Black packed their things, traveled to Tianjin, and sailed to Japan for another hectic two week tour before returning to England via Canada. When Russell arrived in China nine months earlier, much of the previous hope placed in Woodrow Wilson had been transferred to himself. In this sense, Bertrand Russell would similarly disappoint. However, the sense of betrayal that followed Versailles did not reappear after Russell's departure. Rather, a consensus would be implicitly reached by the May Fourth movement that no single foreign individual could personally fix China's problems. Indeed, the anticipated invitation to Henri Bergson never materialized, and the two guests of the Lecture Society in subsequent years, Hans Driesch and Rabindranth Tagore, would receive far less fanfare. Evidence that this shift began even as Russell was bedridden in China can be seen in Mao's business report for the Cultural Book Society, in which he wrote "at present, there is not a great demand for Western books in Hunan," although plans were still in place to distribute *Five Major Lectures by Russell*.¹⁹⁴ Instead, many who looked to Russell would instead turn to Russia, which could and was willing to operate in China at the scale necessary to have an impact in addressing their problems.

The immediate response to Russell was to his Farewell Address, and the occasion it provided for making concluding statements on his visit. Some such as *Minguo Ribao's* Han Wei asked "whether those who co-opted Russell's name were listening" when he

194 See Schram, *Mao's Road to Power, Volume II*, 47.

promoted State Socialism over capitalism for developing industry.¹⁹⁵ Sun Fuyuan (孫伏園), a reporter for Li Dazhao's *Xin Chao* (新潮, or *New Tide*) magazine and a translator of Dewey and Russell, wrote about both on July 11, the day they departed. He noted that Russell, "driven out by illness after only a few months, is gone indeed and we feel sad. We thank [Dewey and Russell] for not deserting a barbarian race like ours. We can only hope that we won't be the same the next time we receive them."¹⁹⁶ When the English-language, American-edited *Peking Leader*, angry over a recent controversy (discussed later) and perhaps still smarting from Russell's letter the previous Christmas Day, wrote in August that "it must be admitted that [Russell] did not make a very profound and deep-going impression here in China," several Chinese immediately came to his defense. Ding Wenjiang (丁文江), a geologist whom Russell saw much of in Beijing and regarded very highly as one of China's preeminent scientists, wrote to provide evidence that Russell deeply touched the hearts of the Chinese people, and retorted that while some superficial men were not prepared or interested in his technical lectures, it is wrong to therefore conclude the same held true for others.¹⁹⁷ Zhao Yuanren also responded with a letter criticizing the editorial and providing his own positive evaluation, saying Russell's visit proved worthwhile simply by virtue of his daily interaction with China's young future

195 Han Wei 汉胃: "'Jiajie mingyi' de ting de ma? '假借名义' 的听得吗?", *Minguo Ribao* 《民国日报》1921年7月15日.

196 Quoted from Schwartz, *The Chinese Enlightenment*, 121. Originally from Fulu (伏廬): "Duwei boshi jinri qule 罗素先生今日去了", *Chenbao* 《晨报》1921年7月11日.

197 Letter from V. K. Ting (Ding Wenjiang) to the Editor of *The Peking Leader*, August 5, 1921. See Bracers 583 and Ding Zijiang, *Luosu yu zhonghua wenhua*, 85. It's not clear how Ding interacted with Russell in China, but he left a deep and positive impression. Russell wrote Charlotte Furth on March 23, 1964 that "I remember V. K. Ting vividly as I saw a good deal of him while in China." Regarding Russell's influence outside of social and political affairs, see discussions in Hu, *China and Albert Einstein* and Xu, "Bertrand Russell and the Introduction of Mathematical Logic in China."

leaders.¹⁹⁸ The previous month, and a few days after the Farewell Address, Zhao had even been the focus of an article which sought to explain Russell's strong reluctance to publicly criticize the shortcomings of the Chinese people despite their own insistence—Russell's apologists in China were still hard at work doing damage control for his *praise* of China!¹⁹⁹

Russell had his defenders in China, but the intellectual leader best positioned to have an impact promoting Russell's farewell address after his departure would instead turn against him. Zhang Dongsun, likely still frustrated over the stream of attacks he received the previous year as Russell stayed above the fray, unloaded on him, saying that “after Russell's visit, no ‘afterword’ is called for, but after his final lecture on ‘China's Road to Freedom’, I can't help but express a few words of disappointment. Russell's speech contradicts his earlier opinions in so many places—for example: in his lecture on socialism at Peking University he said it would be best for China to adopt Guild Socialism, but in ‘China's Road to Freedom’ he says we must have an agro/labor dictatorship (劳农专政); in ‘Industry in Undeveloped Countries’ he says big industry is a tool of the imperialist powers and isn't natural ... but in ‘China's Road to Freedom’ he says China must develop its industry; at his farewell banquet he said China needs a few dozen (打) good men, but in ‘China's Road to Freedom’ he says ten thousand are needed; in Japan's *Kaizo* he says patriotism is not inherent but inculcated, but in ‘China's Road to Freedom’ he says that the Chinese ‘lack’ patriotism.” Russell “really doesn't understand

198 Letter from Zhao Yuanren to the Editor of *Peking Leader*, August 7, 1921. See Bracers 75733.

199 “Luosu bu ken shuo Zhongguoren de duanchu—Zhao Yuanren tishuo 罗素不肯说中国人的短处—赵元任替说”, *Chenbao* 《晨报》1921年7月11日. See Feng, *Luosu yu zhongguo*, 155. Following Russell's subsequent writings, this criticism would not entirely go away; in mid-1922 Chinese readers would again be reminded that, while Russell's praising of China was nice, the Chinese don't need to be praised, but instead should be criticized in order to recognize and fix their faults. See “Rangan: xiao rangan san ce 杂感：小杂感三则”, *Chenbao Fukan* 《晨报副刊》1922年5月22日.

Chinese matters,” Zhang concluded, perhaps intentionally echoing Zhou Zuoren’s op-ed in *Chenbao* the previous October. “He still hasn’t fixed his own thoughts, so how can he lead us?”²⁰⁰

Fu Tong replied in what became a long three-letter debate published in *Chenbao*. Fu reviewed Zhang’s charges and responded to what Zhang called Russell’s “delusions” (梦话) with his own interpretation. He also reminded Zhang that Russell himself said he could not feel much confidence in the practicability of his Farewell Address. Fu noted how Russell only “spoke on what he saw” and “what he saw at the beginning was different from at the end;” much of what he said was not a contradiction because his view of what ends were desirable and what means were possible in each circumstance stayed fixed. Fu’s point was that Russell was not indecisively changing his mind based on the same data, only evolving his opinion with more information about China’s conditions, but he also could have pointed out that Russell anticipated as much and pleaded for more time because of it. Fu concluded by welcoming Zhang’s expert discussions on Russell’s ideas, but said he did not welcome misrepresentations of Russell’s words.

Zhang responded that Russell’s views could not have changed so much unless he himself had changed. Zhang stood by his opinions, particularly emphasizing that “the Chinese love their *country* certainly no less than those in Europe and America.” The only difference is “when Westerners meet a problem, they put their country’s backing behind their *government*.” China still has no government that the Chinese can respect, but when

200 Zhang Dongsun 张东荪: “Houyan 后言”, *Shishi Xinbao* 《时事新报》1921年7月31日. Russell’s banquet dinner speech is difficult to locate. It is not clear whether his call for “a few dozen” (打) Chinese was understood clearly. If Russell in fact only said “a few,” then 10,000 people out of 400,000,000 certainly is a few, especially compared with the size of other governments. His translator may have added the counter 打. It’s very hard to imagine Russell using the word “dozen” in the context of an entire government unless he was only focusing on a top-level group, but what is more important is what the Chinese understood in their translation.

it does “Chinese patriotism will rise precipitously.” Zhang’s point was that the Chinese did not require a “dictatorship of the proletariat” to force them to collectively act in their own well-being—a well-run liberal (but he still thought socialist) government would do just as well. Fu responded in the final letter with a new analysis of the Farewell Address involving means (手段) and ideals (理想) that showed the impasse would not be resolved by further discussion.²⁰¹

Hu Shi was another who did not regret seeing Russell leave. Hu was hostile to Russell’s visit. The reason is unclear, but perhaps is due to Russell’s previous strong criticisms of John Dewey’s Pragmatism and the fact that beginning in mid-1920 he frequently overshadowed Dewey, Hu’s own guest, among both the vocal left-wing proponents of “isms” in China and the more moderate *Jinbudang* group.²⁰² They appear never to have crossed paths in any meaningful way despite both being in Beijing. Hu would write in his diary on July 6th that “Russell and Ms. Black made their final speeches today. I originally intended to go, but it rained and the ground was muddy so I stayed home. Before, when I was ill, I couldn’t hear him speak. Then when I recovered, he fell ill, so I’ve missed all his lectures. Today was the last chance, but it just wasn’t meant to be (无缘). Too bad.” As if to remove all ambiguity, Hu’s journal entry ten days later would contain a *baihua* poem called “The Philosopher”:

He doesn’t want a nation, but we’re urged to love ours;
He doesn’t trust the government, yet we should have State Socialism.
He likes his roads to freedom—he gave us a different choice;

201 Fu Tong, Zhang Dongsun 傅铜, 张东荪: “Zhi Zhang Dongsun xiansheng shu, Zhang Dongsun xiansheng da shu, da Zhang Dongsun xiansheng shu 致张东荪先生书, 张东荪先生答书, 答张东荪先生书”, *Chenbao* 《晨报》1921年 第3期 第2号. Reprinted in *Zhexue* 《哲学》第3期, 91–106页. Emphasis added.

202 Indeed, there is some evidence that Russell (and later others) were invited to get a diversity of foreign opinion in China so that Hu’s preference for Dewey would not ‘win’ by default.

He doesn't much approve our road, but says we can't join his.
He said the salvation of China only needs ten thousand men,
or a few dozen will suffice
—With all due respect, we say to him, of this kind of idle talk we've long since had enough!²⁰³

However, Hu Shi would internalize Russell's call for a small dedicated political group of selfless men and reproduce it in his calls for a new "ism": "Good Government-ism (好政府主义)." Within a few months of Russell's departure, Hu would recognize that "we need a group of 'good men' (好人) to come together and struggle energetically towards this objective. If the good men don't show, the bad will snatch the world and go!" Over the next year, he and Ding Wenjiang would further such calls and even publish a brief, generic manifesto also signed by Cai Yuanpei and Li Dazhao, among several others, though ultimately to little effect.²⁰⁴

Chen Duxiu would also internalize and repeat Russell's address, in his case explicitly, and indeed Hu Shi's new "ism" may have been a response to its resulting developments. In one rapid-fire thought that closed the July 1921 issue of *Xin Qingnian*, Chen wrote that, just as there is no evidence that one can have a people without a government, one also cannot have a government without a political party—be it made up of the propertied capitalists or of the propertyless communists. Quoting at length from his

203 Quoted from Ding, *Luosu yu zhonghua wenhua*, 82. Many still felt it worth attending Russell's speech. A contemporary report wrote that "in spite of the rain, there was a large attendance." See "News from North China," *Weekly Review of the Far East*, July 16, 1921.

204 Ding, *Luosu yu zhonghua wenhua*, 82. Unlike Chen Duxiu, Hu Shi does not cite Russell as having any inspiration for his new perspective. Russell's influence may have been subconscious, but either way he also would not have wanted to take credit from Hu for this new movement. Several later Chinese historians have assumed Russell's Farewell Address had some influence. For statements on the movement, see also Hu Shi 胡适 Gan Zhexian (biji)甘蛰仙 (笔记): "Zai Zhongguo daxue de yanjiang 在中国大学的演讲 (1921年10月22日)", *Chenbao Fujuan* 《晨报副镌》1921年11月17日至18日. Also see "Women de zhengzhi zhuzhang 我们的政治主张" published in *Chenbao* 《晨报》1922年5月15日, *Juewu* 《觉悟》1922年5月18日, and *Nuli Zhoukan* 《努力周报》1922年5月14日第2期. This last periodical was established on May 7, 1922 and chose the English name "The Endeavor." The characters '努力' also appear in Chen Duxiu's "主义与努力" discussed previously, but translated differently in this thesis. It appears in this magazine that the Chen's earlier call to make an 'effort' to implement an "ism" had taken hold.

Farewell Address, Chen saw Russell's call for ten thousand resolute men to be "a very significant hint": "The Party is the mother of government, government is the child of the Party; rather than cry out 'reform the government', we should cry out 'reform the Party'!"²⁰⁵ Whereas Zhang Dongsun saw a country/government dichotomy and thought the former would throw its support behind the latter after it was fixed, Chen saw a party/government split, where the government could only be fixed by a small, dedicated party. In another brief thought of the same issue Chen responded to Zhang Dongsun's "sub-optimal theory" (卑之无甚高论), which we recall was inspired by Russell, with a few new ones of his own: On Russell's call for patriotic men to rise up and lead the Chinese masses who are still devoid of patriotism—"I think this is a quite suitable sub-optimal theory for the Chinese people." On Russell's call for these ten thousand men to take control of the government and rebuild Chinese industry—"I also think this is a quite suitable sub-optimal theory for the Chinese people." Chen continued in this vein, concluding that "the Chinese people are simply a pile of loose sand ... a bunch of narrow individualists with no public spirit." The greater the number of capable men that enter government the better, but where are they to be found in China? To entrust China's leadership to the worst would be to commit suicide. The best sub-optimal theory, says Chen, citing another writer, is to "first let Lenin kill us, and then we'll kill Lenin"—i.e., to follow Russell's call to first take control of the government (Chen apparently assumes violently) and then turn it back over to the people after the Party's job is done (this time

205 Chen Duxiu 陈独秀: "Suigan lu (124) zhengzhi gaizao yu zhengdang gaizao 随感录 (124) 政治改造与政党改造", *Xin Qingnian* 《新青年》第9卷 第3期, 1921年7月. For more discussion on Chen Duxiu's response to Bertrand Russell, see Lee Feigon, *Chen Duxiu: Founder of the Chinese Communist Party* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), 147-152.

one assumes through voluntary political suicide).²⁰⁶ Within weeks Chen would help found *in absentia* the Communist Party of China.

Russell's Farewell Address also caught the attention of the foreign community in an instance of his soon-to-be major new objective of assisting the Chinese by inhibiting the Great Powers, a desire he hinted at in October 1920. In his Farewell Address he stated that "the American ex-Minister, Mr. Crane, has been advocating international control for China on the ground that the Chinese government cannot keep order, a prospect which grows not unnaturally out of the Consortium."²⁰⁷ Charles Crane, in an unofficial capacity, had previously made this suggestion according to the *Peking Leader*, and later on July 24 while in Japan would be quoted as saying that China's salvation could only come through "some sort of international financial control."²⁰⁸ Russell would recall the following March that "to my amazement, there was an uproar among the very Americans who had advocated the Consortium. The editor of the *Peking Leader*, in whose paper the interview had appeared, seemed astonished that I could believe it to be genuine, and made difficulties about permitting my address to be reprinted."²⁰⁹ Russell concluded that "this

206 Chen Duxiu 陈独秀: "Suigan lu (122) bei zhi wushen gaolun 随感录 (122) 卑之无甚高论", *Xin Qingnian* 《新青年》第9卷第3期, 1921年7月. Though not explicitly mentioned, the title and contents are clearly a direct response to Zhang Dongsun's previously discussed article that set off the national debate about socialism in November 1920.

207 Russell then agreed that "international control of all nations must be the ultimate goal of all who wish to further the cessation of war," which is impossible given "the present anarchy in relations between States." He suggested international control in Britain over their treatment of the Irish, and in the USA over the constantly recurring "Boxer uprisings" by Southern Whites against Southern "Negroes." In an inspired twist, he suggested the latter case "might be put down by contingents of black troops drawn from all parts of Africa." Russell's primary target in his criticisms of the West viz. China in the coming years would be its transparent hypocrisy. He concluded this section saying "no doubt the Chinese government is bad, but so are all other governments," and he doubted China's government was as harmful as those of the victors in the war.

208 See Rempel and Haslam, *Collected Papers 15*, 330-31, 539 note 263:25. The *Japan Chronicle* is the source of the quote. The original *Peking Leader* article is difficult to locate for an exact quote.

209 Russell was pressured to delete the passage and ultimately compromised on a footnote saying that some deny Crane ever said this. Russell continues "I left China immediately afterwards, and do not

shows the curious confusion of mind which enables people to advocate a loan [via the Consortium] on condition of internal changes, and yet to imagine themselves opposed to international control.”²¹⁰ Russell gave another example in the same article of an aggressive reaction to a piece on China by Putnam Weale. In Russell’s view, such responses were “due to being touched on the raw,” and gave the lie to the so-called benign intentions of such groups, who would not respond with such anger and blanket denials “if [they] had had nothing to conceal,” but rather would seek to explain any misunderstandings or fix potential contradictions in their policy. The takeaway for Russell was that China could benefit from more friends like himself in Europe and America—true friends, as he saw it, who were willing to use the freedom of the press to publicly shine the spotlight on the West and frame the issues in such a way that China could better avoid any disastrous impact on its own well-being from the hidden internal processes of other countries.

As with his earlier Changsha speeches, Russell again had some direct effect on China’s development through his Farewell Address, in the way that effective writing can help formulate ideas and provoke a response by raising awareness. His effect was also

know what subsequently occurred, except that the *Peking Leader* published an editorial criticizing my work as a professor.” In Bertrand Russell, “As a European Radical Sees It,” *Freeman*, March 8, 1922. Russell was also contradicted in other pro-US Chinese press: “Colonel Drysdale, American Military Attache, who accompanied Mr. Crane to Manchuli, stated that as far as he was aware, and he was with Mr. Crane practically all the time, the ex-Minister made no such statement. Colonel Drysdale’s impression is confirmed by several other Americans in Peking who knew Mr. Crane well.” See “News from North China,” *Weekly Review of the Far East*, (Shanghai) July 23, 1921.

210 The argument that from one perspective China was the intended beneficiary while from the other the Great Powers were, while supported by Dewey, fell on deaf ears with Russell. The key difference in Russell’s opinion was that China wasn’t actively seeking loans, but rather the Consortium was actively trying to push these loans onto a Beijing government that time and again demonstrated its shortcomings—why would the Consortium keep trying to force a large loan onto a government with an extremely low ‘credit rating’? To their credit, Beijing’s government was smart enough to refuse these offers. Russell saw ‘benevolent’ actions like this as actually being first steps towards a legal foreign takeover, in this case through a debt trap. Russell was in many ways a realist in international relations and viewed each country, weak or strong, as motivated by self-interest. He seems never to have ignored an opportunity to expose this true motive of the Powers when circumstances forced it to surface.

felt socially along with Dora Black in their public relationship, as well as through Black's own full schedule of activities. While in China, Russell was still in the process of divorcing his first wife of 26 years, Alys Smith, and was openly in a romantic relationship with Dora Black. This made him a social outcast to most of the expatriate community in China—indeed it was a significant factor in his choice to live in traditional *hutong* surroundings, and as a result his time was spent almost exclusively interacting with Chinese intellectuals. Ironically, Russell's personal life created scant controversy in China, where many social customs were then even stricter than in England. For example, marriages were still arranged in China according to the traditional custom—even Hu Shi was engaged by his family at age 12 to the woman he would marry 13 years later.

One effect of Russell and Black's example was to help liberate some Chinese from traditional marriage practices, and their thinking about gender and family in general. To give a high-profile example, Russell's interpreter Zhao Yuanren was deeply influenced by him, and Russell loaned Zhao 100 pounds to buy his way out of his own arranged marriage. Zhao's subsequent civil marriage to his love interest Yang Buwei proceeded with none of the traditional wedding customs. This new "Russell-style Marriage (罗素式婚姻)" quickly attracted attention, with *Chenbao* publishing an article on the "new-style wedding of new-style people (新人物的新式结婚)."²¹¹ Previously, social interactions between men and women were rare, with even a future husband and wife seeing little of each other prior to their wedding. After Russell's departure Hu Shi, Zhao's close friend

211 Lu Fangshang 吕芳上, "Fali yu siqing: wusi shiqi Luosu, Bolake xiangjie laihua yinfa hunyin wenti de taolun (1920-1921) 法理與私情：五四時期羅素、勃拉克相偕來華引發婚姻問題的討論 (1920-1921) [Legal rule and private love: Discussion on the Problem of Marriage as generated by the Russell and Black's visit to China (1920-1921)]," *Jindai Zhongguo funü shi yanjiu (Research on Women's History of Modern China)* 近代中國婦女史研究 9 (August 2001): pp. 31-56. Zhao, *Life with Chaos*, 107-112. Jin Feng, "With this Lingo, I Thee Wed: Language and Marriage in *Autobiography of a Chinese Woman*," *Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 18 (2011): 235-247.

and a witnesses at his ceremony, discussed with Margaret Sanger during her visit to China how a new fashion had sprung up of young couples in China living together without being married—not to mention their freely choosing their relationship to start with. “It seems,” Hu told Sanger, “that Mr. Bertrand Russell and Ms. Black are blamed or credited for this great move; it is on the increase, or so it is said.”²¹²

In addition to the influence-by-example of Russell and Black, Russell also ensured that Dora Black’s time in China would not simply be spent accompanying him, unlike John Dewey and his similarly outspoken and well-educated wife Alice. Black was a graduate of Girton College, the then-women’s college of Cambridge University, which had yet to become a coed institution. At 26 years old, she was in the same age group with many of the May Fourth students and intellectuals she interacted with. Black lectured at Peking Women’s Normal College on women’s education and economics, with her lectures published alongside Russell’s in the *Russell Monthly*. She also wrote an article on women’s issues for *Funü Zazhi* (妇女杂志, *Women’s Magazine*),²¹³ spoke publicly in a variety of setting alongside Russell, and conducted her own study group with the female students of Peking University. On January 9, 1921, Russell and Black jointly hosted Russell’s Study Group to discuss “The Problem of Marriage.” In stark contrast to the small turnout for the discussion on “Analysis of Mind,” 8 female and 35 male students

212 Mirela David, “Bertrand Russell and Ellen Key in China,” In Howard Chiang, ed., *Sexuality in China: Histories of Power and Pleasure* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2018), 79.

213 Bolake 勃拉克: “Shaonian zhongguo de nannan nünü 少年中国的男男女女”, *Luosu Yuekan* 《罗素月刊》1921年 第4期 210–224页. This farewell lecture was also printed in *Minguo Ribao* 《民国日报》. Bolake 勃拉克: “Jingji zhuangkuang yu zhengzhi sixiang 经济状况与政治思想”, *Luosu Yuekan* 《罗素月刊》1921年 第2期 103–132页, 第3期 119–202页. This lecture was also printed in *Jiaoyu Gongbao* 《教育公报》. Bolake 勃拉克: “Funü wenti 婚姻问题”, *Funü Zazhi* 《妇女杂志》1921年 第7卷 (第5期 11–14页), (第6期, 16–18页). For further discussion, see Roxane H. Witke, “Transformation of attitudes towards women during the May Fourth era of modern China” (PhD Dissertation: University of California, Berkeley, 1970), 168–175.

participated in this session.²¹⁴ Black also led discussions on this topic with the women of the Peking Mutual Aid Teams (北京互助团), the precursor to the later agricultural collectives. Considering that Russell's hosts were unaware of his relationship with Dora Black before his arrival, these activities could only have been arranged through Russell, indicating the importance he also placed on Dora's work in China.

The enthusiastic reception of Bertrand Russell and Dora Black's relationship and activities by many May Fourth participants can be understood as a continuation of the interest shown in Henrik Ibsen's play *A Doll's House* (1879), which appeared in a special June 1918 issue of *Xin Qingnian* dedicated to his works.²¹⁵ Ibsen's critique of the traditional European family, as seen through the eyes of Nora, the unhappy wife of a successful banker, resonated deeply with many Chinese readers. Hu Shi, who oversaw the special issue, commented on its relevance to the China of 1918. In Dora Black, many May Fourth participants may have seen a living example of a liberated Nora, during a time before Lu Xun poured cold water on this vision with his famous speech "What Happens after Nora Walks Out?" delivered in December 1923 at the Peking Women's Normal College. In January 1923 another article by Dora Black (now Russell) would be published in *Funü Zazhi* accompanied by a large picture of her with her newborn child, indicating the lingering positive sentiment towards her and a still-strong memory of her pregnancy while she was in China.²¹⁶

214 "Luosu Bolake di hunyin tan 罗素勃拉克底婚姻谈", *Minguo Ribao* 《民国日报》1921年1月14日.

215 Witke, "Transformation of attitudes towards women during the May Fourth era of modern China," 164-167. See *Xin Qingnian* 《新青年》1918年 第4卷 第6号 for the issue dedicated to Ibsen. This was the first issue to be dedicated to the works of one person. The second was to Karl Marx in May 1919 and the third to Bertrand Russell in October 1920.

216 罗素夫人 (Dora Black) 著, 云鹤译: "Zhongguo de nüquan zhuyi yu nüxing gaizao yundong 中国的女权主义与女性改造运动", *Funü Zhazhi* 《妇女杂志》1923年第9卷第1号. This

However, it is significant to note that Black's voice was not isolated by May Fourth society to only serve as a female's perspective on family and women's issues. In addition to her university lectures on economics, *Xin Qingnian* published in April 1921 a translation of her open letter to the *Freeman* in which she elucidated Russell's controversial views on Bolshevism and Socialism after his trip to Russia alongside her own analysis.²¹⁷ Coming in the wake of the November 1920 Changsha controversy, this long article-length letter would have been read with interest as directly weighing in on the debate that was then unfolding in China as well.

Before Russell and Black's arrival, the transformation of attitudes towards women and the traditional Chinese family that Ibsen was part of inspiring found another outlet in the "Family Research Society (家庭研究社)," established in February 1920 by Peking University students, including Yi Junzuo (易君左), Luo Dunwei (罗敦伟), Luo Aoxie (罗璈璈) and Cheng Shewo (成舍我). The first of seven issues of their associated journal "Family Research (家庭研究)," which advocated for family reform and women's liberation, was published in August 1920.²¹⁸ Russell and Black quickly attracted their attention, with the third issue, published in early 1921, dedicated to them. While Russell's special edition in *Xin Qingnian* that investigated his political thought and philosophy is still relatively well known today, this lesser known "Russell Marriage Research Edition"

article was translated a second time from its original translation published in the Japanese magazine *Josei Kaizo*.

217 Bolake 勃拉克: "Yifeng gongkai de xin gei 'ziyou ren' (yuekan) jizhe 一封公开的信给 '自由人' (月刊) 记者", *Xin Qingnian* 《新青年》1921年 第8卷 第6期. The *Freeman* was critical of Russell's reaction to Russia's Bolshevik revolution. The open letter was dated October, 20, 1920.

218 For an in depth discussion of the ideas published in *Jiating Yanjiu*, see Susan L. Glosser, "The Truths I Have Learned: Nationalism, Family Reform, and Male Identity in China's New Culture Movement, 1915-1923," In Susan Brownell and Jeffrey Wasserstrom, eds., *Chinese Femininities/Chinese Masculinities: A Reader* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 120-144.

was a similarly detailed investigation of Russell and Black's discussion on "The Problem of Marriage."²¹⁹ The members of this *Beida*-originating society would continue their activities in the 1920s along similar lines, with Russell's inspiration evident. Cheng Shewo and Luo Dunwei would also each edit and publish collections of Russell's and Black's translated lectures in China.²²⁰ In this aspect of Russell's visit we have a clear example of Zhao Yuanren's general defense of the value of his (and Black's) visit when he said that Russell's daily interaction with Young China alone had made his visit worthwhile.

Another area where widespread impact from Russell's visit appears to have lingered in China for several years, especially in foreign minds, was in the rapid growth of anti-Christian sentiment among the young.²²¹ In 1920-21, the Young China Association, which ran the influential magazine *Shaonian Zhongguo* (少年中国, or *Young China*), turned its focus on religion's role in Chinese society. It was this organization, jointly with the Philosophical Club of Peking Students, that invited Russell and Dewey to lecture on religion in order to "get the question settled" once and for all, as Dewey put it. That lecture would be the one delivered by Russell on January 6. *Shaonian Zhongguo* would devote three issues to "The Problem of Religion," consisting of many contributions by prominent Chinese, plus a reprinting of Bertrand Russell's January 6th

219 "Luosu hunyin yanjiu hao 罗素婚姻研究号", *Jiating Yanjiu* 《家庭研究》1921年 第1卷 第3期. This special edition on 'Russell marriage' contained five articles dedicated to Russell and Black. For further discussion, see Lu Fangshang, "Fali yu siqing: wusi shiqi Luosu, Bolake xiangjie laihua yinfa hunyin wenti de taolun (1920-1921)," 46-51.

220 I would like to thank Eileen Cheng-yin Chow for her discussion on this aspect of Russell's visit.

221 For a general discussion, see Jessie G. Lutz, "Chinese Nationalism and the Anti-Christian Campaigns of the 1920s," *Modern Asian Studies* 10, no. 3 (1976): 395-416. Dawley, "Changing Minds." For a book-length study, see Jessie G. Lutz, *Chinese Politics and Christian Missions: The Anti-Christian Movements of 1920-28* (Notre Dame: Cross Cultural Publications, Inc., 1988).

lecture.²²² The question was also taken up in the pages of *Xin Qingian*, *Juewu* and *Xin Jiaoyu* (新教育, or *New Education*) in the coming months.

The view of religion taken by Young China was universally critical, with many directly echoing Russell's own words according to contemporary opinion. In early 1922, students from across China formed an Anti-Christian Student Federation (非基督教学生同盟) in Shanghai in response to news that, in April, the World Student Christian Federation would hold its 1922 meeting in Beijing—itsself a decision that directly resulted from the coalescing of missionary activity around combating Russell's perceived influence in China. Peking University's students quickly dominated the group and broadened its name to the Anti-Religion Federation (非宗教同盟), better aligning with Russell's general criticisms in January and their own sentiments. Chen Duxiu and Cai Yuanpei were among the sponsors of this group, and even Liang Qichao expressed his approval. The first anti-Christian wave came to a head with the publication in 1922 of a major 600-page joint Protestant survey entitled *The Christian Occupation of China*, which greatly heightened fears of missionary activity as the religious arm of imperialism. The title "Chinese for Christ" (中华归主) also appeared on the cover in Chinese characters, which, because it sounded far more innocent and had some familiarity among the Chinese, gave the survey an additional touch of conspiracy when contrasted with the English title.

The period 1922-24 saw the height of the anti-Christian movement. While Young China had many sources of inspiration to which to turn and did not explicitly place Russell at its head as they would Lenin for Communism, their stated desire to "settle" the

²²² These were the February 15, 1921, May 15, 1921 and August 1, 1921 issues. The following background discussion follows Lutz "Chinese Nationalism and the Anti-Christitan Campaigns of the 1920s."

problem with the help of Bertrand Russell—and Russell’s own willingness to speak authoritatively on this particular topic (and with a viewpoint acceptable to Young China)—indicates that there is substance to later charges made against him. A Chinese professor of Philosophy of Religion at Peking University would later remark to the Philosophy Club, the same that was addressed by Russell, that, “as shown in the declarations of The Anti-Religion Federation which appeared in various papers, it can be seen that the reasons for the attack upon religion are all based upon the address that Mr. Bertrand Russell delivered to the members of the Young China Association last year.”²²³ Lucius Porter, in his contemporary history, would write how Russell stimulated Chinese hostility to the April 1922 World Student Christian Federation meeting, as well as the National Christian Conference of China in May, since “the movement found its particular occasion” in Russell’s “perverted conception of religion.”²²⁴ Another person would recall the “misguided attack on Christianity” launched by the Anti-Christian Student Federation, “especially,” he would point out, “their statement that the Christian movement is linked up with capitalism. Some of their writings sound very much like Bertrand Russell. The seeds he sowed here last year have undoubtedly borne fruit.”²²⁵

223 T’u Hsiao Shih. “What the Chinese are Thinking about Religion: The Attitude of a Chinese Literatus.” *Chinese Recorder*, May 1923. The English translation of the speech quoted here must have been published long after the date it was originally delivered. Unlike the following, unambiguous mistake made by Porter, this particular speaker would have been clearer on the year Russell was in China.

224 Lucius C. Porter, *China’s Challenge to Christianity* (New York: Missionary Education Movement of the United States and Canada, 1924), 170-171, 198-199. Porter’s account is notable for being off by one full year on Russell’s visit, putting him in China during these conferences. This perhaps shows the eagerness of Western Christians to attribute China’s anti-Christian activity directly to Russell as opposed to the Chinese themselves. That tendency would help explain why missionaries responded by simply being more proactive in their “occupation” of China—if the ‘misrepresentations’ of a foreigner could create this mess, then even louder ‘clarifications’ from foreigners could fix it.

225 C. S. Chang, “The Anti-Religion Movement,” *Chinese Recorder*, August 1923.

To be sure, occasional soul searching could be observed as well; the editor of the *Christian Recorder* would ask rhetorically “does not the claiming of extraterritorial privileges give some colour to the charge made by Mr. Bertrand Russell and others that Christian idealism and Western imperialism go together and depend on one another? Is this not a Gordian knot that must be cut?”²²⁶ Another young former editor of China’s edition of the *Christian Advocate* would write how several causes of the anti-Christian outburst had been proposed; some preferred Bolshevism and others declared that “the hands may be the hands of anti-Christian Chinese students ... [but] the voice is the voice of Bertrand Russell.” Instead, although this person would see Russell as having played some role, the chief cause in his eyes was the aggressive proselytizing activity by white Christian missionaries—and we have seen how Russell spurred the increase in this activity in China.²²⁷ However, the majority of the Christian community would agree with the final assessment of Bishop Laress Burney of the Methodist Episcopal Missions in Central China when, in 1924, he condemned Russell in a widely publicized address delivered at his denomination’s Quadrennial Conference in Boston, around the same time when Russell too was passing through Boston on a speaking tour. In his address Burney “assailed” Russell for speeches delivered to “anti-Christian meetings” in China, saying that “the youth movement in China includes a group which is assailing the Bible and Bertrand Russell has lent his aid to this anti-Christian group by appearing and speaking at its meetings.”²²⁸

226 “The Editor’s Outlook,” *Christian Recorder*, July 1923.

227 Paul Hutchinson, “The Anti-Christian Reaction in China,” *Christian Advocate*, June 29, 1922. Hutchinson was active in the Episcopal Church in China, but thought Christianity would only take hold when China’s non-believers perceived that Chinese Christians were its sole champions.

228 “Assails Bertrand Russell: Bishop Birney says English Pacifist Aids Anti-Christians in China,” *New York Times*, May 19, 1924.

We can thus conclude that the one speech on religion delivered by Russell while in China was his most influential single act during his visit. It was effective at tapping into a preexisting negative sentiment towards Christianity in China. But, while Russell certainly helped to motivate the choir, his one published speech was probably directly responsible for few new converts to the cause; these would come primarily through the activity of Young China. However, Russell clearly impacted the missionary response to anti-Christian sentiment within China; rather than take it at face value, missionaries preferred to blame Russell for manipulating his audience with “falsehoods” and so see the solution in *more* aggressive proselytizing, thereby self-inflicting even greater damage. As for the Chinese side of Russell’s impact, the American journalist Nathaniel Peffer, who lived in China for 25 years and interacted with Russell during his visit, would conclude in May 1924 that “if you were to ask any group of missionaries in China what has been the cause of the anti-Christian movement, most of them, I believe, would put the blame on two men ... Bertrand Russell and John Dewey. Now, in a sense they are right, but the movement was certain to come in any case. It is in the spirit of the times.” Momentum had been slowly forming, but “then came from Christian lands two men, distinguished among their own people, whose testimony lent authority to what had been only hesitant skepticism and tentative revolt. Opposition became forthwith more open and confident. Only to this extent can the anti-Christian movement be attributed to Mr. Russell and Mr. Dewey.”²²⁹

We previously saw how another area where Russell had an indirect and unexpected influence in China was its reaction to his views on Bolshevism. However, while his words helped alter the course China’s political development, this would

229 Nathaniel Peffer, “The Uniqueness of Missionaries,” *Asia* 24, no. 5, May 1924.

ultimately lead to a fuller embrace of Russia and rejection of Russell's more liberal views among China's communists. Mao would write a report in the summer of 1921 on the "Affairs of the New People's Study Society," in which he described a major debate held in January, complete with member voting. On the topic of methods for social reform, five options were on the table, including "1. Social policy; 2. Social democracy; 3. The radical type of communism (the doctrine of Lenin); 4. The moderate type of communism (the doctrine of Russell); 5. Anarchism." Some disliked that "the Russians sacrificed freedom to equality" and so had a preference for Russell, but the large majority preferred Bolshevism. Mao rejected outright all but the third, in the process declaring "the extreme freedom advocated by Russell" benefits the capitalists too much, so it won't work. While some expressed deep appreciation for Russell (and Dewey) in the coming days—Jiang Jixu would no longer "think constantly of the hopeless, dark, and evil side of things," but felt "some joy in life" under their influence—the majority were pro-Russian and appeared all the more sure of themselves for it.²³⁰

Two reasons Russell's earlier words about Bolshevism would prove so controversial were the facts that he self-identified as a socialist and personally visited Russia just months earlier, i.e., he sympathized with Bolshevik aims and understood Russia's true conditions. At the same time, while China had many who looked to Russia for inspiration, none had yet even visited, let alone report back on conditions there. Therefore, the Chinese had no domestic figure with firsthand knowledge to whom they could turn for a second opinion. At the level of abstract ideas, those like Li Dazhao would continue to argue forcefully for Communism, but to defend the Bolsheviks themselves China could only muster the likes of Johnson Yuan, who accused Russell of "hurting the

230 Schram, *Mao's Road to Power, Volume II*, 59-86.

feelings of the Soviet Russian people.”²³¹ China’s first prominent visitor, the 22-year-old Qu Qiubai (瞿秋白) would leave for Russia as a *Chenbao* correspondent during Russell’s visit, but no major report would return until after Russell left China. Qu would not enter the Russell debate until long after it had passed, but did later feel he should respond to this controversy on the record with his now-authoritative views. Though deeply interested in Russell before his trip, and respectful towards him after, Qu would provide his rebuttal in *Xin Qingnian*, thereby representing a transition to more credible Chinese accounts based on first-hand knowledge.²³²

The Canton regime would also embrace the Soviet Union, primarily, and in a sense explicitly for reasons of expediency. Canton welcomed Soviet envoy Adolf Joffe in 1922 and, following the Sun-Joffe Manifesto, the Comintern would send Mikhail Borodin in 1924 to assist the GMD in its goal of uniting all of China, with the written understanding that the Soviet system was inappropriate for it. In the very early stages Britain’s *North China Herald* would see, through somewhat distorted lenses, a still-dominant Russell as viable competition. In late 1922 they would write that Joffe still needed “to justify himself by creating as great an impression on the intellectuals as Mr. Bertrand Russell,” and recognized that, “seeing little of Mr. Russell, the foreign residents of China were perhaps slow to grasp the great influence he was exercising upon Young

231 Zhen Ying (translator) 震瀛 译: “Piping Luosu lu Suweiai Eluosi (cankan Luosu you E de ganxiang yi wen) 批评罗素论苏维埃俄罗斯 (参看罗素游俄的感想一文)”, *Xin Qingnian* 《新青年》1920年 第8卷 第4期. Yuan wrote that Russell “大大伤害了苏维埃俄罗斯各处朋友的感情.” A disappointed Yuan would conclude that “we remember how Wilson and Lloyd George used to be [i.e., promising self-determination], and how they completely changed [after Versailles]. Now we see that Russell’s time has similarly passed.” Yuan would summarize the substance of his article with the statement “Russell’s opinion is totally wrong.”

232 Qu Qiubai 瞿秋白: “Ping Luosu zhi shehui zhuyi guan 评罗素之社会主义观”, *Xin Qingnian* 《新青年》1923年第1期, 153-155页. For more on Qu, his interest in Russell and his Russian experience, see Jonathan Spence, *The Gate of Heavenly Peace: The Chinese and their Revolution* (New York: Penguin Books, 1982), 169-179.

China.” The paper believed Russell still had a strong hold on the minds of the young through his activities in Britain, which is the focus of the next chapter.²³³

While the Guomindang and Russell did quickly develop a deep mutual respect, Russia was Canton’s lifeline and Bertrand Russell would be just one valuable member “on the team.”²³⁴ We can see the appreciation for Russell held by influential figures within the Canton regime in a letter written to the *North China Herald* by Eugene Chen. This letter was written in response to another article there which dragged Russell’s name through the mud. Eugene Chen was an English speaking Overseas Chinese (华侨) born and raised in the French West Indies. Meeting Sun Yat-sen in London, Chen would follow him to Guangzhou where he ultimately became a high-ranking mouthpiece for the radical wing of the Guomindang, then united with a subordinate CCP. Responding to an article by Russell, the *North China Herald* would remark on the “quite unusual influence exerted on the mind of Chinese students by the Hon. Bertrand Russell ... he is extraordinarily popular with this section of the Chinese people.” But as for a complement Russell pays to the Chinese, which the paper read as being in fact a backhanded insult of Europe, “readers of the English magazine know Mr. Bertrand Russell and understand perfectly what a [complement] like this means. Simple Chinese, like Mr. Eugene Chen, take it literally [and] pat themselves on the back ... the truth is Mr. Russell talks a lot of

233 “Notes & Comments: Mr. Russell on China,” *North China Herald*, September 2, 1922. *NCH* claimed “that influence and admiration still hold” and “when he opens his mouth upon China [in Britain] his words possess a power which even a man such as Mr. Joffe can scarcely have as yet.” Russell had just warned that China would take up militarism in response to Europe, and *NCH* warned that, with Young China always “obsessed with some ‘ism’ or another,” the remark may be taken up by them.

234 Of course this suited Russell perfectly. He would make very few suggestions for China to follow after returning to Britain, and almost all would come at the end of his book *The Problem of China*, as would have been expected.

unmitigated nonsense” and only the “foolish youth” take him seriously.²³⁵ Chen responded that “you are quite wrong in your view of the degree of influence” Russell has had outside of Young China, noting that “even Mr. Lloyd George has not disdained to quote Bertrand Russell in the House of Commons,” and that Russell’s criticisms of Bolshevism led to Lenin’s “dramatic surrender and his fundamental revision of Communist theory and practice.” In the end, while the original article may have been just an exercise in “studied rudeness” (certainly answered in kind by Eugene Chen), the effort in Chen’s response to make it clear that Russell’s writings are taken seriously by more than just “young kids” must be speaking for many in the Guomindang as well.²³⁶

We can see that, whereas Russia would come to have an all-encompassing structural and ideological influence, Russell’s influence would be limited to the individual level. Three more individuals, Sun Yat-sen, Lu Xun and Liang Shuming (梁漱溟), can briefly conclude this chapter to underline how responses to Russell were personal, unique and could not have formed the basis for collective action. In his “*Sanmin Zhuyi* (三民主义, Three Principles of the People)” Sun would write, with some of that narrow racism noted by Chen Duxiu, how “regarding foreign impressions of China, [in China’s current situation] one needs to have lived here for 20-30 years or be an open-minded philosopher like Bertrand Russell to see that Chinese culture is superior to the West and deserving of praise. The average foreign barbarian can only see the Chinese

235 “Mr. Russell and Young China (Jan. 23),” *North China Herald*, January 28, 1922. Russell’s article was “A People Who Value Wisdom above Rubies,” *Review of Reviews* 64 (Nov 1921).

236 Eugene Chen, “To the Editor (Jan. 24): Mr. Bertrand Russell and Young China,” *North China Herald*, January 28, 1922. Chen is referring to Lenin’s decision to temper some of the extreme revolutionary parts of Bolshevism. Both articles discussed in this paragraph were written in a very pretentious style. The paper commented on this “studied rudeness” only in regard to Chen’s response.

as not civilized.”²³⁷ Sun appreciated Russell’s recognition of China’s superior aspects and viewed him as a mouthpiece to promote China rather than as a consultant.

Lu Xun would mock Russell’s description of China’s “happiness” in *The Problem of China* (1922), where Russell praises his sedan chair bearers who, despite performing labor that would be considered degrading in the West, nevertheless laughed among themselves and appeared to enjoy life. In his oft-repeated reaction, Lu wrote that “I’m not sure what Russell is getting at, but if those sedan chair bearers had been able to not smile at their riders, China would not be in its current predicament.”²³⁸ Lu resented Russell’s praises as in effect relegating China to forever remain a quaint museum for the world.

Liang Shuming, who as a prominent 28-year-old philosopher of the “Easternization” group was “China’s last Confucian,” originally wrote in March 1921 of his “reservations” about what he saw as Russell’s “unscholarly attitude in intellectual debate” with regard to Henri Bergson. This despite Liang’s own significant effort to appreciate the idol of his close friend Zhang Shenfu.²³⁹ But by the publication of his major *Eastern and Western Cultures and Their Philosophies* (1922) the following year, in which he declared that “the future world culture will be a revival of Chinese culture,” Liang would see in Russell’s deep appreciation and recognition of the superior aspects of

237 Quoted from Ding, *Luosu yu zhonghua wenhua*, 114-115. See Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 3rd edition, 290, for his summary evaluation of Chen Duxiu’s views on Sun Yat-sen. Sun apparently believed the Han race to be a “chosen people” along religious lines (i.e., superior by blood), which is significant because he is still celebrated as a founding father in both the PRC and ROC.

238 Quoted from Ding, *Luosu yu zhonghua wenhua*, 88. Ding tells a funny story from 1925 that also indicates Russell’s broad and lingering influence at the individual level. When grading one “Russell-mad” student’s essay on the topic of Russell’s writings about China, Lu Xun would write on the assignment: “Your draft gets 90 points, of which 5 go to you (3 for transcribing effort, 2 for the few sentences of commentary you wrote at the end). The remaining 85 go to Russell” (p. 86-88). Stating the obvious, the student’s essay consisted almost entirely of Russell quotes. Russell and Lu, had they met, might have gotten along very well.

239 From Schwartz, *Time for Telling Truth is Running Out*, 139-140. The original article was titled “Dui yu Luosu zhi buman 对于罗素之不满.”

Chinese civilization the thoughts of a Westerner “most like Confucius,” and so best aligned with Liang’s own views. As with others, Liang was reading and interpreting Russell selectively when he claimed his ethical and social views to be “completely the same as Confucius.”²⁴⁰

In March 1924, the *Peking University Daily* would publish the results of a poll gauging the sentiment of the university. 1,056 votes would be cast for “the greatest Chinese,” with Sun Yat-sen coming in first with 473 votes, followed by Chen Duxiu (173), Cai Yuanpei (153), Hu Shi (45), warlord Duan Qirui (段祺瑞, 45), Liang Qichao (29), warlord Wu Peifu (吴佩孚, 27), Li Dazhao (25) and many others. Fewer votes would also be cast for favorite newspaper and top “ism”—with socialism the clear winner among the combined male/female respondents: the top five were socialism (社会主义, 225), Sun’s three principles (孙文三民主义, 108), democracy (民主主义, 51), federalism (聯省自治, 30) and Hu’s “good government-ism” (好政府主义, 14). Among the 497 who voted for the “greatest foreign figure in the world,” Russell would come in third, well ahead of Dewey (9th) and behind only Lenin and Wilson, the latter notably receiving the same number of votes as the “ism” of democracy. However, there would be no ambiguity over whose version of socialism the students preferred; Russell would receive 24 votes, while Lenin would receive almost ten times that number with 227.²⁴¹

240 It was also probably the last significant “Second Confucius” label Russell would receive. See Guy S. Alitto, *The Last Confucian: Liang Shu-ming and the Chinese Dilemma of Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 105, 109-111. For a Chinese analysis see Gu Hongliang 顾红亮. “Lun Liang Shuming dui Luosu zhexue de ruhua” 论梁漱溟对罗素哲学的儒化 [How Liang Shuming reconstruct Bertrand Russell’s philosophy in Confucian way], *Xueshu yuekan (Academic Monthly)* 学术月刊 47 (2015): 42-47.

241 *Beijing Daxue Rikan* 《北京大学日刊》1924年3月5日1411期。See the next issue for the top “isms.”

Chapter 4

Bertrand Russell and the Informal China Lobby in Britain, 1921-1927

When Bertrand Russell returned to England he chose not to pursue the resumption of his former lectureship at Cambridge University. Rather, public interest in his views on current affairs would see him turn to full-time writing and the occasional set of public lectures. Russell had previously had some financial difficulties after losing his job at Cambridge during the war, but he “saved 1,000 pounds in the Far East and now everybody wants articles on China because of the Washington Conference,” so the money would be “pouring in.”²⁴² His immediate writings would hit all the main themes vis-a-vis China in the World that would lay the foundation for his analyses in the coming years, particularly the watershed period of 1925-27. He would write of China’s historic civilizational greatness, its inevitable future power, and therefore the Great Powers’ need to not take advantage of its temporary weakness. He would condemn “sphere of influence” thinking, duplicitous actions by the Powers, and Britain’s fierce opposition to the progressive elements in China as all being woefully shortsighted. He would exclusively and energetically promote the Canton regime and try to explain and legitimize the sentiments of Young China. He would also urge his own Labour Party to take the long view on foreign relations, and especially to cultivate its own information sources about China so that the British government and people would not continue to be beholden to the monopoly on information held by career diplomats and businessmen

242 Letter from Russell to Ottoline Morrell, November 23, 1921.

sympathetic to the Imperial cause.²⁴³ Russell himself, and the informal China lobby he inspired within Britain, would become a channel for making this other side of the China story known to the British public in the press.

Russell would also continue to be a friendly British point of contact for the Chinese people, having personal correspondence with several figures and groups in the coming years. He would welcome the young poet Xu Zhimo (徐志摩) to stay with him and Dora, giving him a copy of *The Problem of China* in 1922 to take back with him and introduce to the Chinese. He would remain engaged with Chinese student organizations and political representatives, for example meeting with Chinese diplomats when touring the US, speaking to Chinese student organizations in Great Britain at which high ranking Chinese representatives were also present,²⁴⁴ and writing an article for the monthly of the Chinese Students Association of the United States. Incidentally, this article showed his continuing discomfort with China's future leaders seeking Western tutelage and concerns about China's future path, including the caveats that "writing for Chinese readers, it seems appropriate to emphasize rather what the Chinese can do for themselves than how foreigners ought to help them," and "I wish to see in China just so much of nationalism as is necessary for self-preservation, but no more."²⁴⁵

243 Interview with Bertrand Russell the *Daily Herald*, August 29, 1921. Interview with Bertrand Russell *Labour Leader*, 18, no. 35, September 1, 1921. Bertrand Russell, "The Future of China: What Will the Washington Conference Do?" *Labour News*, November 10, 1921. Bertrand Russell, "China and the Powers," *Foreign Affairs*, November 1921. Bertrand Russell, "A Plea for China: Her independence Chief Question," *The Sun*, November 24, 1921. According to Bracers, Zhao Yuanren would write at least 15 letters to Russell over the coming several years. Others would be received from Xu Zhimo (9), Ding Wenjiang (3), Cai Yuanpei (2) and many others from individuals and organizations.

244 For example see Letter from Hamilton C. Hsu (Xu Zhimo) to Russell, December 6, 1921, Letter from Russell to Ottoline Morrell, January 31, 1922 and "Wells Apologizes for Acts of his Countrymen in China," *Japan Times & Mail*, November 29, 1925. (via *Peking Leader*)

245 Bertrand Russell, "Reconstruction in China." *Chinese Students' Monthly*, February 1, 1922. He also wrote that "a stable government in China will have to be federal ... analogous to the American Constitution," indicating a new change in opinion, since he unlikely thought the American federal system

Although Russell disagreed with Bolshevism, he was entirely sympathetic to Young China and its fight to liberate itself from traditional Confucian values. Perhaps Russell even saw some of himself in the young Chinese, remembering the liberation he felt when young after casting off the philosophy of Hegel that then dominated the minds of Europe's intellectuals. For their part, China's young international students would attend his public lectures in droves.²⁴⁶ Within six months of returning to Europe, Russell's recollection of his experience had morphed and solidified such that he could declare "I liked China much better than Europe—the people are more civilized—I keep wishing I were back there." He now made it his intention to "do anything in the world to help the Chinese," but soberly recognized that "it is difficult. They are like a nation of artists, with all their good and bad points."²⁴⁷

Bertrand Russell had tremendous sympathy for the Chinese people in their struggle to rejuvenate their country. China did not coerce 99-year leases on foreign territory like Britain or attempt to trap foreign countries with debt as he believed the American-led Consortium was trying to do to China. It was not rapidly expanding its military like Japan or dictating to foreign citizens and interfering in their domestic affairs like the Bolsheviks. It was not expanding its territory into Southeast Asia like France. Russell saw that China just wanted to be left alone "to work out its own salvation" without forcing itself onto the rest of the world according to its own terms as the Great

was compatible with State Socialism.

246 For example, see "Mr. Bertrand Russell on the Far East: Give China a Breathing Space," *North China Herald*, May 6, 1922.

247 Letter from Russell to Ludwig Wittgenstein, February 7, 1922. Letter from Russell to Ottoline Morrell, January 31, 1922. This last statement was elicited by Russell's observation, after listening to the Chinese *chargé d'affaires* speak, that "the Chinese constantly remind me of Oscar Wilde in his first trial, when he thought wit would pull one through anything, and found himself in the grip of the great machine that cared nothing for human values."

Powers were then doing. He would become a champion for China, but not in the way that others championed Russia, seeing in the Bolshevik's economic system a solution to the world's problems. (European support for Bolshevik-style authoritarianism would not rise precipitously until the next decade with Nazi successes.) Rather, in the 1920s Bertrand Russell would do all he could in Britain to help give China the temporary breathing space it needed for its own social and political reconstruction, with the hope that China's intrinsic creativity could thereby overcome the increase in possessive impulses that accompany increasing industrial power.

In this chapter, I roughly separate Russell's efforts on behalf of China into three periods. The first period lasts from his return in late 1921 until the general election of December 1923. It sees Russell debriefing the public on his visit to China, with an emphasis on using the media to radically reframe the "Problem of China" through his articles, speeches and a book of that name. The major international event that gave momentum to this discussion was the Washington Conference. The second period covers the first Labour Party government of 1924, with the major event being Russell's inclusion on the Boxer Indemnity Committee, followed by his removal with the Conservative's return to power and its aftermath. The final section begins with the Shanghai Massacre of May 30, 1925 and follows events through the Shanghai Massacre of April 12, 1927. This period saw Russell's growing anxiety that Britain was again sleepwalking into a world war, this time in East Asia. It also saw his collaboration with—but not leadership of—the quickly forming informal China lobby of British citizens. Russell's focus on China ends in disillusionment with Chiang Kai-shek's violent break with the Communist faction of

the GMD in April 1927, after which a more relaxed Conservative government would accelerate its “imperial retreat” from China.²⁴⁸

Determining a measure of Russell’s impact is challenging since primary sources from Britain’s pro-China organizations are notoriously limited.²⁴⁹ This makes it difficult to definitively show Russell as the major direct cause of the pro-China turn in Britain between 1921 and 1927 that so vexed policymakers in the Foreign Office. What can be shown is that Russell’s views on British policy in China were consistently ahead of their time and regularly sought out by the undoubtedly influential British Left establishment, of which Russell was one of its best-known members.

Russell on the “Problem of China” and the Great Powers, 1921-1923

After returning to England and recognizing his opportunity to earn a living as a public intellectual, Bertrand Russell spent much of the following two years presenting a new China to the British. He sought to make the British people see China, and Britain’s role there, in a fundamentally new light by using a provocatively blunt writing and speaking style in order to galvanize public opinion towards his ends. Today, social scientists might describe his approach as one of novel “issue framing” for the purpose of inspiring new “collective action.”²⁵⁰ While China was one primary focus for Russell in the early 1920s, this general strategy applied to other issues as well, including women’s

248 For general histories of the period of ‘imperial retreat’, see Edmund S. K. Fung, *The Diplomacy of Imperial Retreat: Britain’s South China Policy, 1924-1931* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991) and Phoebe Chow, *Britain’s Imperial Retreat from China, 1900-1931* (London: Routledge, 2016).

249 For example, Tom Buchanan notes how the general ‘Hands off China’ movement of the mid-1920s “has become encrusted with myth and this—alongside a lack of archival sources—has somewhat obscured its form and political character.” See Buchanan, *East Wind*, 30.

250 Robert D. Benford and David A. Snow, “Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 26, no. 1 (2000): 611-639.

voting rights, Britain's Irish and labor policies, the various Great Power rivalries, and his continuing antiwar activism, which he hoped would be more effective in peacetime than in wartime.²⁵¹ In this section, I review some of these framing efforts as they relate to China.

In November 1921 the Washington Conference would convene for three months to discuss disarmament and the future of the Pacific. It attracted intense interest in Britain because, as Adam Tooze writes, it was "in many ways a more dramatic expression of the new order than the Paris Peace Conference" of 1919.²⁵² Its primary concern was to reach an agreement on naval arms limitations, but for China it represented a second chance to make its case before the world. Generally speaking, the China issue was not seriously considered by the British people, and among Russell's first actions upon returning to England was to assist China in promoting its cause to the public. On November 29, December 6 and 13, he would deliver a three-lecture series on "The International Problems of the Far East" for the Women's International League in Milton Hall, Manchester, to a paying audience of 500.²⁵³ In announcing the lecture series, the *Manchester Guardian* would remark that "in view of present discussions at the Washington Conference the lectures should be of unusual interest," particularly given Russell's recent "personal observation and investigation" of China.²⁵⁴ At the request of

251 Bertrand Russell, "Now is the Time! Arthur Ponsonby's Book Reviewed by Bertrand Russell," *No More War*, October 1925.

252 Adam Tooze, *The Deluge: The Great War, America and the Remaking of the Global Order, 1916-1931* (New York: Viking Penguin, 2014), 396-407.

253 In Britain, these lectures were reported in "China Today and Tomorrow: Japan's Share in Anarchy: Mr. Bertrand Russell's Lecture," *Manchester Guardian*, November 30, 1921. "Europe and China: Mr. Bertrand Russell's Manchester Lectures," *Manchester Guardian*, December 7, 1921. "The Problem of China: The Peace America May Give Her," *Manchester Guardian*, December 14, 1921. Attendance was reported in "The Hon. Bertrand Russell on China," *North China Herald*, January 28, 1922.

254 "Mr. Bertrand Russell and the Far East," *Manchester Guardian*, November 26, 1921.

the *Guardian*'s editor, Russell also wrote an accompanying three-article series on China for the paper.²⁵⁵

Russell's framing approach is already front-and-center in these speeches and articles. His primary refrain, which must have been provocative at the time considering how often it would be repeated in the coming years, was that the Chinese are not an "inferior race," but in fact have "a civilisation which is at least as good as our own." While not a trained historian, Russell was a voracious and discriminating reader—in January 1922 he observed that "most days I hardly go outside the house," being too busy "reading and writing about the Far East"²⁵⁶—and he would remind his audience of China's "historical greatness," comparing it to the combined influence of ancient Greece and Rome. The British people, he thought, have "no sense" of this history, while at the same time they revere "the majesty of Rome even in decay." He would later observe during a speaking tour of Scotland how even "the sense of geographical relativity is lost—you must compare China with Europe as a whole." Many wars could take place there "without ever being noticed." Indeed, Russell lamented that a "wrong impression" of the Chinese had long infiltrated British minds from popular representations, such as in comic operas and Bret Harte's "Heathen Chinees," not to mention in newspaper reports.²⁵⁷

In Manchester, Russell also described the current "economic domination" of China and how, unless the Powers changed their ways, it would be forced to militarize. He tried to expose the sinister motives of international diplomacy, such as the Anglo-

255 Bertrand Russell, "China and Chinese Influence," *Manchester Guardian*, November 29, 1921. Bertrand Russell, "The Problems of China," *Manchester Guardian*, November 30, 1921. Bertrand Russell, "Is Chinese Independence Possible?" *Manchester Guardian*, December 2, 1921.

256 Letter from Russell to Ottoline Morrell, January 31, 1922.

257 "Mr. Bertrand Russell on the Far East: Give China a Breathing Space," *North China Herald*, May 6, 1922.

Japanese agreement to preserve “the independence and integrity of the Chinese Empire.” China was not consulted, and to those who “understand the language of diplomacy” China’s alarm was warranted, because “such agreements are an infringement on sovereignty, and are never concluded except as a prelude to interference.” British hawks would justify interference by pointing to China’s political chaos. To shock his readers, Russell would retort by claiming that China’s “only serious inferiority is in scientific homicide.” Current international power does not characterize the soul of a nation.

However, one aspect that separated Russell from the propagandists, such as those for the Bolsheviks, was his willingness to openly acknowledge the imperfections of China. Russell again noted China’s bad government, official corruption and over-dependence on Confucius. He pointed out Chinese inaction regarding the famine. He also noted with some disapproval that the opinion of many modern Chinese was that their country was *better off* after Europe’s arrival because it had spurred China’s modernization, something only opposed to by China’s reactionaries.²⁵⁸ But his departure from many proponents of the Empire was on the appropriate role of foreign countries in effecting change; given its long historical greatness and ability for new stable dynasties to replace corrupt fallen ones, Russell thought the best response was simply to leave China alone. He also differed from propagandists by accepting Great Power realities and, rather than call for violent revolution, chose to work within the system by directly appealing to participants of the Washington Conference. He called on Japan to return Shandong and Britain to return the port at Weihaiwei, which technically should have reverted to China

258 “The Hon. Bertrand Russell on China,” *North China Herald*, January 28, 1922. The correspondent for the NCH wrote that “there was a perceptible fall in the temperature of the hall when he gave this instance of native error. It was evident that the audience thought that such facts ought to be suppressed, and that the lecturer showed a lack of tact in mentioning them.” The anti-Russell NCH was likely over-exaggerating, but the comment shows the tightrope Russell had to walk between promoting China in blunt terms, while avoiding expectations of the fringe for pure propaganda.

in 1905 after Britain's ally Japan drove Russia out of Port Arthur in Dalian. Yet he knew that "it is useless to expect any nation to pursue any end which it does not believe to be in its own interest." In the short-term he would try to make the Powers see benevolent action in China as being in their own self-interest. In the long-term, though he was an "ambivalent socialist" in the final analysis,²⁵⁹ in the early 1920s he would call for a peaceful transition to world Socialism through the democratic election system, because "the existing capitalist system is in its very nature predatory, and cannot be made the basis of just dealing between nations."²⁶⁰

These examples give a sense of the effort made by Russell to alter British perceptions of China through direct public appeal. He also challenged the press. Discussing free thought in society, he argued that "thought is not free if all the arguments on one side of a controversy are perpetually presented as attractively as possible, while the arguments on the other side can only be discovered by diligent search." Such obstacles, he suggested, exist "in every large country known to me, except China, which is the last refuge of freedom" for open and uninhibited discussion.²⁶¹ He directly challenged the reporting of the conservative British press, which on matters of the Empire was so entrenched in its sense of speaking for the "common Brit" that it appears not to have replied to such challenges. The *Times* of London can provide one illustration. On November 26, the *Times* would report from Washington that "the matter of real moment to the Conference and the world is not what the Mandarins in Peking, or what the Western educated reformers in the South [Canton], desire, but what the people of China

259 Ryan, *Bertrand Russell*, 81-102.

260 Bertrand Russell, "How Washington Could Help China," *Daily Herald*, December 16, 1921.

261 Bertrand Russell, *Free Thought and Official Propaganda, Delivered at South Place Institute on March 24, 1922* (London: Watts & Co., 1922).

—the dumb, industrious, peaceful millions of China—desire.” Britain, through the Maritime Customs, controlled all money flowing into Beijing’s coffers from China’s imports. (They refused to allocate any to Canton, which would soon become a major sticking point in relations.) Regarding China’s desire to control money received by the Customs, the *Times* published that whether “the [Chinese] people would care to see it in [Beijing’s] hands is very doubtful indeed. The eloquence of the Chinese delegates may delude the uninformed; it can only serve to remind those who know Asiatics that the more an Oriental diplomatist is Westernized the less confidence does he command in the East.”²⁶² Regarding the “duplicity” of intellectual China, Russell would have none of it. He used his newfound authority to write in response to the *Times* that “my own experience of the Chinese who have had a modern education was that they are as upright, as intelligent, as delicately considerate, and as free from national prejudice as any set of men.” On the other side, “those who pretend that they are not to be trusted . . . must be either very ignorant or very depraved.”²⁶³

Russell would also directly challenge his own Labour Party to take China more seriously as a policy issue. The Labour Party still wanted to engage with Russell after closely collaborating with him during the war. He would redeliver his three-lecture Manchester series to the Independent Labour Party in London at their request. He would give an interview to Fenner Brockway, his wartime collaborator in the No-Conscription Fellowship, for the *Labour Leader*²⁶⁴ and write articles at the request of the Labour Party

262 “China at the Conference,” *Times* (London), November 26, 1921.

263 Bertrand Russell, “Is Chinese Independence Possible?” *Manchester Guardian*, December 2, 1921. See Bertrand Russell, “As a European Radical Sees It,” *Freeman*, March 8, 1922 for a second example of a direct challenge to the *Times* reporting on the Customs money.

264 “War Brewing in the East: Interview with Bertrand Russell,” *Labour Leader*, September 1, 1921. In Rempel and Haslam, *Collected Papers 15*, 441-443.

information service²⁶⁵ and the Union of Democratic Control, the antiwar organization Russell helped establish.²⁶⁶ (His speaking tour of Scotland in March 1922 would also be presented partly under the auspices of the UDC.)

One important early article, in view of later events, would be published in *The Labour Magazine*, which was established by the Labour Party and Trades Union Congress in May 1922. Russell would receive an invitation that month to contribute on a topic of his choosing. His article would be published in September and opened with the direct question: “What concern has British Labour with China?” After perfunctory acknowledgment of China’s detrimental impact on the average wage-earner in Britain, Russell moved to his more pressing concern that “Chinese problems, handled as imperialist would wish to handle them, may easily land us in another war, compared with which the last will have been child’s play.” It is in Britain’s own interest “to pursue a humane and unaggressive policy in the Far East.” Russell informed the Party that, while “almost all the British in China sneer at Young China, and the columns of the *Times* are filled with utterly misleading accounts of this party,” they in fact represent the best of China and will determine its future course. Noting Labour’s minimal impact on Britain’s foreign affairs, Russell lamented that “progressive people in this country have not yet learnt to make their public opinion effective, as regards distant undeveloped countries, where the most reactionary Englishmen have it all their own way.” As he would repeat two years later after the failure of the first Labour government, Russell advised that “the Labour Party ought to have a correspondent in China to keep them informed of the

265 Bertrand Russell, “The Future of China: What Will the Washington Conference Do?” *Labour News*, November 10, 1921. This is likely based on his third Manchester lecture.

266 Bertrand Russell, “China and the Powers,” *Foreign Affairs*, November 1921. This is likely based on his second Manchester lecture.

grossest crimes committed in our name, and ought to secure publicity by questions and debates in Parliament.” In China, Russell found “that the British are hated by all patriotic Chinese, and that their grounds for hatred are such as I could not refute. Our bad actions in China are not in the interests of our country as a whole, but only in the interests of a few rich men. *Publicity could do much to mitigate them.*”²⁶⁷

It is in keeping with Russell’s antiwar past that, in addition to his dominant concerns, most important to him from a practical standpoint was receiving reliable, unbiased information from China and relaying this to the British people effectively. He would observe that “among the many recent books on the Far East there are extraordinarily few that are tolerably free from national bias. The British bias is familiar to readers of Mr. J.O.P. Bland and *The Times*.”²⁶⁸ While having accurate information was necessary, if it were not effectively put before the public it could have no useful political impact on foreign policy. By 1926, as will be seen, a critical mass of public opinion had formed to constrain options in China, and Russell was undoubtedly a major factor in this. In this earlier period, however, the British government and people were focused almost exclusively on postwar Europe. Thus while Russell’s speeches were well-attended and his articles widely read, responses from the more unsympathetic sections of Britain were muted, and so controversy was minimal.

However, sectors of Britain still saw danger in Russell and took action when forced to. When the Oxford Labour Club invited Russell to speak on the Far East, he would be blocked by the Vice Chancellor of the university because “on no account would he have Mr. Bertrand Russell addressing a public meeting in Oxford” as he did at

267 Bertrand Russell, “Chinese Problems,” *The Labour Magazine*, September 1922. Italics added.

268 Bertrand Russell, “Chinese Entanglements: Review of *China, Captive or Free?* By Gilbert Reid,” *Foreign Affairs*, 3, no. 9 (March 1922).

Cambridge during the war.²⁶⁹ But many students welcomed his new perspective. Oxford's Labour magazine wrote that "those who would be well informed on the extraordinary situation in China cannot do better than read the brilliant articles on that subject by Bertrand Russell in the *Manchester Guardian*."²⁷⁰ Among Chinese in the West, he was universally praised. The Chinese Students' Association of the United States, while loathe to agree that "East and West should meet" (because "conceit and self-exaltation ... are as much a part of our nature as they are of the West"), recognized that only mutual cultural understanding could lead to reconciliation, and "Mr. Russell, we must all thankfully admit, is rendering an extraordinarily valuable service along this line."²⁷¹ In Britain, his presence in December 1922 at a formal dinner bidding farewell to Sir Ronald Macleay, the new British Minister to China, at the invitation of Macleay's hosts (the Anglo-Chinese Friendship Society, the Chinese Legation, and the Chinese Students' Central Union) could only have been intended to send a message of the type of impact these groups hoped Macleay would have in his new post.²⁷²

Other early responses to Russell, as the previous chapter discussed in the context of missionary work, were from the foreign press in China. Robert Bickers writes how the British residents of China scorned short-term visitors such as Russell, reserving their praise for its long-term residents. These were naturally "few in number and tended to monopolize the transmission of information while attacking competing interpretations." They rarely had any formal training to supplement their first-hand knowledge of China

269 "Oxford University Labour Club: Public Meetings Banned," *Manchester Guardian*, November 5, 1921. "Ban on Oxford Clubs," *Daily Mail*, December 14, 1921.

270 "Political Notes," *Free Oxford*, December 10, 1921.

271 "Mr. Russell Comments," *Chinese Students' Monthly*, January, 1922.

272 "Anglo-Chinese Relations," *Times* (London), December 14, 1922.

and they excluded all Chinese input regardless of viewpoint. Giving context to Russell's call for new information sources, Bickers explains how Britain's domestic press relied on English-language papers and journalists of the treaty ports for most of their information, meaning news from China that was "not biased towards supporting the position of the treaty port communities was scarce."²⁷³ Russell's national prestige and effective communication skills posed a direct threat to this privileged position, which explains why the British in China responded so early and forcefully to his activities in Britain. While their denunciations were primarily published in China, the animosity it produced in local communities, considering Bickers' observations, would have been intended to filter back into Britain's domestic press and influence opinion there. A second effect, which would apply generally to reporting in China, may have been to ensure that the treaty port communities remained several steps ahead of the Foreign Office in controlling their own fate, just as the following decade would see Japan's military stay several steps ahead of the Japanese Diet in Manchuria.

Two of the major English-language papers in China were the *Peking & Tientsin Times* and the *North China Herald*. In Beijing, Russell would receive a subscription to the former, edited by H. G. W. Woodhead, which informed much of his understanding of British attitudes in China. The latter, as mentioned in the previous chapter, took up the sword in opposition. Typical of their approach, as we have seen, was to deride Russell's most receptive audience. In China this was the May Fourth participants; in Britain this would be his built-in antiwar audience. In one abridged example, a *NCH* correspondent

273 Robert A. Bickers, "Changing British Attitudes to China and the Chinese, 1928-1931" (PhD Dissertation: University of London, 1992), 39-43. Bickers notes that the few Chinese who wrote in English were ignored in Britain. These sources of news were for the British public. Diplomats, of course, had a direct channel to the Foreign Office, but their views were also in deep sympathy with the papers of the treaty ports.

would belittle Russell's Manchester audience as consisting of three-quarters women with "freakish specimens" of tag-along men scattered among them "like weeds in a flower garden," including one they described as having "long hair, a dirty collar, and finger nails to match it."²⁷⁴ The *NCH* would also later pin partial responsibility for Britain's problems in China, such as early labor strikes, on Chinese reports of Russell's lectures in Britain, thereby simplifying their "problem," like the missionaries, to one of suppressing such outside voices.²⁷⁵ Russell likely did not see, let alone respond to such articles, but the occasional angry letter from China did make its way into Britain's domestic press.²⁷⁶ In one representative letter, Rev. Arnold P. Lansdown would claim in the *Manchester Guardian* that "Mr. Russell, of course, does not know China. No one who has only spent a few months in this country and who cannot speak the language has a right to speak for China or the Chinese."²⁷⁷ Strangely, Lansdown himself was relatively new to China, arriving in 1921 for a six-year stay, and his own Chinese literacy is therefore doubtful. His words contain a degree of cynicism and provide evidence of the ease with which blind faith could be put in the established "China Hands" of the missionary and treaty port in-groups. With the *London Times* similarly revoking the right of modern educated

274 "The Hon. Bertrand Russell on China," *North China Herald*, January 28, 1922. Such depictions appear to be intended to tap into fears of the Bolshevik 'Red Menace' sweeping British society. See Ariane Knusel, *Framing China: Media Images and Political Debates in Britain, the USA and Switzerland, 1900-1950* (London: Routledge, 2012), 73-126.

275 "Canton Labour party and the Strike," *North China Herald*, March 4, 1922. For examples of reports on Russell's activities in Britain, see "Luosu zhi yuandong guoji wenti jiangyan yi 罗素之远东国际问题讲演一" *Beijing daxue rikan* 《北京大学日刊》1922年1月14日 第934期。"Zhongguo zhi guoji de diwei 中国之国际的地位" *Dongfang Zazhi* 《东方杂志》1922年 第19卷 第6期。Many articles of translations of Russell's writings on China were published in *Chenbao* 《晨报》in this period. See Xu Xiaoqun, *Cosmopolitanism, Nationalism, and Individualism in Modern China: The Chenbao Fukan and the New Culture Era, 1918-1928*. (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014).

276 At this time, the major papers of the left were *Manchester Guardian* and the *Daily Herald*. Major papers of the right were the *Times* and the *Daily Mail*.

277 "Missionaries in China: A Reply to Mr. Bertrand Russell," *Manchester Guardian*, July 24, 1923.

Chinese to speak for China, it is clear that this privilege fell, as Bickers noted, exclusively to those Britons with long-term vested interests there.

While Bertrand Russell would later seek to change this state of affairs by promoting Chinese sources of information, in late 1922 he took a significant step by adding a powerful new discordant Western voice with the publication of his book *The Problem of China*.²⁷⁸ Along with Russell's writings and speeches, his widely-read book would be a major event in the creation of an informal pro-China lobby in Britain. To be sure other English-language writers, predominantly Americans, had written books in support of China since the war. T. W. Overlach wrote about foreign financial control and Thomas Millard called for a more just treatment. Frederic Coleman wrote of the dangers of historical ignorance while Gilbert Reid asked whether China was captive or free.²⁷⁹ However, notable in many of these works is a willingness to place the bulk of present blame on Japan, America's then-competitor, and past blame on now-defunct versions of Germany and Russia. The American Reid, in Russell's eyes, was a "rare exception, a truly just man," in part because "the faults of Japan are told, but not exaggerated [and] the faults of America are not passed over."²⁸⁰ Russell had by then decided that he too could perform a similar useful function in Britain. After the success of his Manchester lectures

278 Bertrand Russell, *The Problem of China* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1922). Several chapters were also reproduced as articles, including Chapter 12: "Some Traits in the Chinese Character," *Atlantic Monthly*, December 1921. Chapter 4: "The Chinese Intelligentsia," *Time and Tide*, January 13, 1922. Chapter 10: "Present Anglo-American Policy in China," *Daily Herald*, January 26, 1922. Chapter 11: "Chinese Civilization and the West," *Dial*, April 1922. Chapter 1: "Toward an Understanding of China," *Century Magazine*, October 1922. Chapter 15: "The Outlook for China," *Century Magazine*, November 1922.

279 T. W. Overlach, *Foreign Financial Control in China* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1919). Thomas F. Millard, *Democracy and the Eastern Question* (New York: The Century Co., 1919). Frederic Coleman, *The Far East Unveiled* (Boston: New York, 1919). Rev. Gilbert Reid, *China, Captive or Free?* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1921). My following comment on these books is based on several contemporary reviews.

280 Bertrand Russell, "China's Entanglements: A Review of *China, Captive or Free?* By Rev. Gilbert Reid," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 3, no. 9 (March 1922).

Russell wrote his publisher Stanley Unwin in November 1921 that he thought he could “make a book without disgracing myself.” He would complete *The Problem of China* the following May, and it would be published in the fall of 1922.²⁸¹

The major change in Russell’s thinking from January 1921, when he told Colette that he would likely not write on China, was the angle from which he felt he could usefully address the problem. In January 1921 Russell still thought in terms of taking up the challenge of understanding China’s internal affairs and making prescriptions for its social reconstruction. Now Russell’s focus would turn to China’s foreign relations. This perspective was noted in reviews of the book. Sir John Jordan, who praised the book overall, would comment with some disappointment that Russell wrote very little about purely internal Chinese affairs, such as “the progress of the New Thought Movement, of the spread of vernacular (*pai hua*) literature, and other kindred matters.” John Dewey similarly observed that missing from Russell’s pages was “a sense of the deepest problem of China as it exists in the consciousness of thoughtful Chinese”—the problem of remaking China “does not attract his attention.” But Dewey’s own experience allowed him to appreciate better than others that “probably no one but a Chinese” could give a thorough depiction “of the most wonderful drama now enacting anywhere in the world.”²⁸² Russell’s unique niche was instead to shine a light on the deleterious effects of foreign influence on that drama, and to set the record straight as to China’s historical place in the world. To the extent that Russell touched on China’s current internal affairs

281 Rempel and Haslam, *Collected Papers 15*, lxxv-lxxvi.

282 John Jordan, “Sir John Jordan’s Review of Bertrand Russell’s Book,” *North China Herald*, December 9, 1922. John Dewey, “China and the West,” *Dial*, February 1923. Both praised the book overall, with Jordan declaring it “a book which will give the question an assured place in the literature of the West” and Dewey finding it “extraordinarily well done; so well done in fact that only those who by some personal experience recognize the difficulties which have been overcome, will perceive how well it is done.”

(as opposed to its history, which he discussed at length), it was primarily to elevate and legitimize the aspirations of Young China—to “cede” leadership over China’s future reconstruction to this group.

In this sense, many were right in agreeing with Dewey that Bertrand Russell used China as a tool with which to criticize the West, not just in *The Problem of China* but also his writings generally. But contrary to the claims of his more cynical critics, Russell cared far more about helping China than obtaining whatever private satisfaction he got from “insulting” the West. Furthermore, if his book were to serve any useful purpose, it could only have been to mitigate foreign bad behavior in China, and not to influence China’s internal situation—Russell was not so arrogant as to write a book in English for Western readers on how best “to change China.” The Western response to this approach, as it would appear across the many reviews of the book, was varied. Some were defensive, calling its chief defects “exaggeration and overstatement,” and sought to shine the light back onto China as being no model for the West either, pointing out China’s own historical inclinations towards “possession, self-assertion, and domination,” and their long tradition of female infanticide “as an almost recognized institution.”²⁸³ Others downplayed the tone of the book as being satire.²⁸⁴ While each review took issue with some aspect, be it Russell’s evaluation of American intentions, missionary work in China, or how tranquil and “artistic” the unchanging world of traditional China really was, nearly all reviewers believed the book to be important and worthwhile reading.²⁸⁵

283 Valentine Chirol, “Mr. Bertrand Russell on the Far East,” *Times Literary Supplement*, September 21, 1922.

284 “Problems of China,” *Times* (London), October 4, 1922. “Bertrand Russell on China,” *Manchester Guardian*, October 10, 1922.

285 For more examples not cited above, see “Bertrand Russell Views the Outlook for China,” *Christian Science Monitor*, October 18, 1922. Henry T. Hodgkin, “What Shall We Think of China?”

Among Chinese voices, Xu Zhimo's review in *Chenbao*, while commenting on Russell's lack of appreciation for Confucius' historical influence compared with the Daoist philosophers, would praise Russell's book as by a "man who truly understands and loves Chinese culture."²⁸⁶ Ng Poon Chew (伍盤照), founding editor of *Chung Sai Yat Po* (中西日报), the major Chinese language daily newspaper of San Francisco, would call the book "one of the very best publications ever issued during the last few years on China and the Orient," and appreciate four salient qualities: "inside knowledge of the situation of China today; frankness and impartiality in discussion; ability to bring himself to see the Chinese point of view; real sympathy to appreciate the feeling of the Chinese people."²⁸⁷ The list hints at the general sense of novelty, probably felt by many Chinese, that Russell's book was willing to honestly entertain the Chinese perspective at all.

One exception to the generally favorable reviews was the *North China Herald*, which responded in a characteristically dismissive way with a literary effort that betrayed their underlying discomfort.²⁸⁸ The *NCH* professed to be "painfully aware that Mr. Russell is inadequately equipped to grapple" with the "big task" he set out for himself. They noted a "kink" in his "outlook on life which makes him hate Americans, British and Europeans and love Chinese, Russians and Asiatics." He was like the famous drunk Chinese poet who declared himself the only one sober. They knew that his book would

Friend, October 20, 1922. "The Peace of Cathay," *Times* (London), October 23, 1922. "The Far East," *Saturday Review*, November 4, 1922.

286 Xu Zhimo 徐志摩: "Luntan Luosu yu Zhongguo du Luosu zhu 'Zhongguo Wenti' 论坛罗素与中国读罗素著 '中国问题'," *Chenbao Fukan* 《晨报副刊》1922年12月3日。

287 Ng Poon Chew, "Bertrand Russell's Book is Applauded by Chinese Editor," *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 3, 1922.

288 J. D., "The Brigands: Bertrand Russell's Tribute to the Foreigner in China," *North China Herald*, November 20, 1922. For letters disagreeing with the review, see C.L., "Correspondence to the Editor: Bertrand Russell (Nov. 21, 1922)," and Ajax, "Correspondence to the Editor: Bertrand Russell (Nov. 26, 1922)," *North China Herald*, December 2, 1922.

“be taken by his countrymen with that good-natured tolerance they ever exhibit towards the crank and the fanatic.” But they were worried that it may also be taken seriously by the Chinese; “impressionable youth will read these pages and it may well be that Bertrand Russell, the pacifist, has sown the dragon’s teeth that will produce an unexpected crop of war and misery. For one of the hallucinations that haunt Mr. Russell’s mind is that the Chinese are men of peace. Their history is as warlike as that of Rome.” Needless to say it was perverse that the *NCH* should frame any future violent conflicts in China as simply a misguided response by the Chinese to incitements by Russell.

However, of particular note, and in fairness also deserving of serious consideration (indeed, it was the major topic of debate in China for several decades), was the *NCH*’s response to what is also the most memorable sentence in the book. Russell opens his third chapter with the story of Lord Macartney’s failed mission to China in 1793. Rather than produce the anticipated opening of diplomatic and trade relations on a basis of equality, the long-ruling Qing Emperor Qianlong would dismiss the overtures of Britain’s King George III with his famously curt reply, which contained the memorable expression “our Celestial Empire possesses all things”—Russell palpably wished that he “could quote it all.” Russell’s intention was not to agree with Qianlong, or to reawaken the wounded pride of the British people. Rather, “what I want to suggest is that no one understands China until this document has ceased to seem absurd.”²⁸⁹

The *NCH* would completely ignore this subtlety, but in fairness their reply would have done well (if moderated in several places and allowing for some anachronisms) in many quarters of Young China, as Russell himself implied according to the *NCH* report on his Manchester lectures. The *NCH* found it “astounding” that Mr. Russell could not

289 Russell, *The Problem of China*, 49-51.

see just how absurd Qianlong's letter was. Tea, silk and porcelain were nice things, but not necessities. "China needed what the West had to offer a thousand times more than the West needed China. She needed science and railways and steamers and telegraphs and hygiene and medicine and knowledge of sanitation. She needed education" and even new vocabulary words "to express the ideas of liberty or of democracy." It was Qianlong's "attitude," representative of a pervasive Chinese belief in their own superiority, that "brought on China all the woes she has since suffered from. Had [Qianlong] been wise in his day ... and welcomed the stranger from afar, China might have started on a course of reform" that would have fixed its problems. As a parting shot, the *NCH* deduced from Qianlong's claim that "the West had nothing worth giving to China" that least of all would have been a competitor to its Confucian system, such as Russell's philosophy, which he had just completed an academic year teaching the Chinese at Peking University.

A reply such as this, considering how both the *NCH* and Young China in fact strongly agreed on its essentials, clearly demonstrates the complexity of the times. Both agreed on China's historical missteps regarding its own place in the world, and were even similar in their feelings of strong contempt for it. And yet everything about these two poles was in fierce opposition to the other. The reason was their individual perspectives. The *NCH*, speaking for the treaty port mentality, thought the Chinese had demonstrated their permanent inability—probably ascribable to their "racial inferiority"—to adapt to a modern world, and so foreign control was the answer. Young China knew the Chinese, after a slow start, were now fully equipped to address the situation themselves and, while Western ideas were valuable, the Western Powers themselves were only getting in the way of implementation of those ideas. The *NCH*, while correct in its diagnosis, rejected the legitimacy of Young China and the May Fourth spirit, now represented by Canton and

personified in its leader Sun Yat-sen, as a force in China's reconstruction. A propagandist might have difficulty accepting this sort of complexity. One salient quality of *The Problem of China*, and a reason why it has aged so well, is its deep understanding of both the British and Chinese perspectives, and its clear-eyed siding with the latter.

In December 1923, the Labour Party would induce Russell to stand as its candidate for Chelsea in the general election. He was not expected to win, and indeed only accepted because of that, seeing in his candidacy an opportunity to promote Labour's causes in the stronghold of a prominent conservative, Sir Samuel Hoare. China did not explicitly factor in his platform, although Labour's "sane and reasonable" foreign policy in other regions did, along with its stance on a host of domestic issues.²⁹⁰ It is revealing that China was not yet considered a political issue worth mentioning, but equally noteworthy was the public's response on election day. Russell would lose, as expected, by a vote of 4,513 to 13,437. But the *Daily Telegraph* reports that, when Hoare exited Chelsea's Town Hall after the results were announced, a "large crowd which had gathered broke the police cordon and pursued him" with threats of violence. Meanwhile, when Russell left "he was carried shoulder high for about a hundred yards down the street."²⁹¹ It was clear that Russell had an energetic base of support on which he could draw in the coming years.

The Boxer Indemnity and a New Labour Government, 1923-1925

Though Russell would not be elected, Britain would have its first Labour government under Ramsay MacDonald in January 1924. The first unequivocal indication

290 Rempel and Haslam, *Collected Papers 15*, 392-397.

291 "Crowd Chase Sir S. Hoare," *Daily Telegraph*, December 7, 1923.

that Russell was having some tangible impact on Britain's China policy would come soon after with his invitation to serve on the Boxer Indemnity Committee. The Boxer Uprising of 1899-1901 was a violent anti-foreign movement by the peasants of China that received the implicit support of Qing Empress Dowager Cixi. After its suppression by a foreign army of eight nations China was made to pay a large indemnity to cover the victors' costs. The United States earned much appreciation in China by quickly returning its share for use in Chinese education, most notably in the founding of Tsinghua University. Russell regretted that the British had not done similarly,²⁹² although it was publicly under consideration since at least 1920.²⁹³ On December 21, 1922, the British *chargé d'affaires* officially informed the Chinese government that Britain would be returning the money. It was soon announced in early 1923 that this would be in the form of an investment in Chinese education.²⁹⁴

In March 1923, Russell led a discussion at the International House in London on the best way to spend the money, with many Chinese in attendance sharing their own ideas. It was agreed that a mixed British and Chinese committee should be rapidly constituted to make an inquiry within China as to their needs. The Chinese speakers emphasized the need for technical and scientific education while opposing any materialistic uses of the fund.²⁹⁵ Russell published his own ideas the following month. He

292 Bertrand Russell, "The Future of China: What Will the Washington Conference Do?" *Labour News*, November 10, 1921. Bertrand Russell, "As a European Radical Sees It," *Freeman*, March 8, 1922. Russell, *The Problem of China*, 54, 217-218.

293 For example, see "The Boxer Indemnity (From S. C. Morning Post)," *Canton Times*, July 20, 1920. "The Boxer Indemnity: Great Britain and Remission (Reuters, March 8)," *Shanghai Times*, March 17, 1920.

294 R. P. Scott, "The Boxer indemnity and Its Relation to Chinese Education (Paper Read on May 8th, 1923)," *Journal of the British Institute of International Affairs* 2, no. 4, July 1923.

295 "Our London Correspondence: Boxer Indemnity," *Manchester Guardian*, March 17, 1923.

noted the benefits to America from their altruism and argued that Britain wouldn't reap similar gains "if the commercial motive is too prominent." The Chinese preferred educational development, but any plan "must meet with the approval of Chinese educationists" if it is to win Britain goodwill. As for whose opinions should be consulted among the British, the three options in China were the businessmen, missionaries and diplomatic officials. As a rule, Russell wrote, businessmen know least about China; they live in Western enclaves, associate almost exclusively with white men and despise the Chinese. Missionaries know China thoroughly, but they view China as a heathen country to be converted, a view "naturally repugnant to most Chinese." They make few converts and "the experience of several centuries of Christian missions in China shows that it is not through them that national rejuvenescence will come." Russell concluded that officials were best by default since they know China deeply, but are still personally detached from business and religious interests.²⁹⁶

As for education, he emphasized that it should be left under Chinese management. Imagine, he said, a French *lycée* in England. The students would know everything about France, and even if they were better educated as a result, they would be at a disadvantage in England. The "same thing applies to China in a much higher degree, because the Chinese differ from us more than the French do." This didn't mean exchanges couldn't

296 Bertrand Russell, "The Boxer Indemnity and Chinese Education," *Manchester Guardian*, April 4, 1923. Not surprisingly, Russell would raise controversy in his comments regarding missionaries. See Sylvester Lee, "Correspondence: The Boxer Indemnity and Chinese Education," *Manchester Guardian*, April 7, 1923. Of note is Lee's comment: "As to the fewness of the converts, seeing that Protestant converts alone now run into hundreds of thousands, there needs something more than mere off-handed statements to prove the contrary." Russell made a rare reply in Bertrand Russell, "To the Editor: Missionary Influence in China (April 9)," *Manchester Guardian*, April 13, 1923. Russell observed that, in a country of 400 million, the numbers Lee gave "may justly be described as few." Russell's mood after reading letters such as Lee's is perfectly captured in his remark that the so-called 'heathenism' of the Chinese is in their "preferring enjoyment to predatory activity, learning to 'useful' knowledge (such as poison gases), and the peace of the sceptic to the military prowess of the fanatic." Needless to say, Russell's article also "stirred up a small controversy" within China according to "Missions and China's Rejuvenescence," *Chinese Recorder*, August 1, 1923.

take place; British professors “would be glad of the opportunity to spend two or three years in the Far East, and the academic type of Englishman would probably be much liked in China.” But Russell thought along the lines of a new Peking University, and not one of China’s missionary colleges. Russell claimed to be speaking only for himself but emphasized that he also “often sought Chinese opinion while in China, and I have recently discussed it with many Chinese now in England.” He believed his recommendations would be welcomed by a great majority of modern, educated Chinese.

Over one year later, the Labour government would form a committee of ten to determine how precisely the money would be spent. Russell would accept an invitation, along with Lowes Dickinson, to represent educational interests on the committee. But before it could convene, the necessary legislation would be delayed by interminable negotiation. In the meantime, Russell’s previous hope in the British official as the contingent best representing Britain in China appears to have faded. He now directly challenged the Labour Party to act quickly on various issues related to China being delayed, realizing that although the representative government had changed, the forces behind the scenes had not. To expose the civil service’s institutional antagonism to the new government, he pointed to Labour’s recent statement on the change in policy of (as Russell describes it) “dropping bombs” on delinquent Mesopotamian villages, only to have the civil service publicly refute that this ever was government policy. “I hope,” Russell wrote, that “the Labor Government will not be too prone to accept the assurances of officials who have no sympathy with its policies.”²⁹⁷ He also called on Labour to quickly fulfill Britain’s recent promises to China: To return the port at Weihaiwei as Lord Balfour promised at the Washington Conference, and to return the Boxer Indemnity

297 Bertrand Russell, “British Policy in the Near East (Book Review),” *Nation*, April 16, 1924.

money for Chinese education, because “the matter is of great importance in Chinese opinion” and Chinese friendship “may before long be very important to us,” not to mention for the obvious reasons of “elementary justice” and to avoid charges of “bad faith.”²⁹⁸

But the frustration would mount as the Boxer Indemnity Bill dragged through Parliament. As a member of the committee close to the Labour Party, Russell could now directly write his allies in power. In July 1924 he wrote a memo to Arthur Ponsonby, Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, highlighting that educational purposes were not yet explicit in the Bill; before specific use of the money could be determined, the scope of its legitimate uses had to be restricted to preempt any influence by special interest groups. Russell pleaded that “I cannot say how strongly I feel on the matter, or what disgrace the government will incur if it uses the money to enrich private capitalists.” Russell also sent a similar memo to Charles Trevelyan, President of the Board (now Secretary of State) of Education, in support of education, writing “I hope you will use your influence in the Cabinet & with MacDonald & Ponsonby to make them view with favour an amendment allocating the money definitely to Chinese education. The matter is really important, because the Chinese value higher education more than Europeans do.” He also ensured that his concerns were aired publicly in the *Daily Herald*. In response, a likely hostile member of the Foreign Office later reported that he “explained to [Russell] in rather strong language our view that the question ought to be left to the Committee (of which he will be a member) and that we are trying to get Parliament to give the

298 Bertrand Russell, “Letter to the Editor: Our Promise to China,” *Daily Herald*, April 21, 1924.

Committee a free hand.”²⁹⁹ Wording on the money’s exclusive use “for educational and other cultural purposes” would soon make its way into the draft Bill.

Russell’s fears were well placed. Although the government had informally committed itself to education, now that the return of money was official a variety of special interests were popping up to argue for their own causes, as the Foreign Office files amply show. Naturally, the British in China hoped to have a dominant influence on the money’s allocation. The *Peking & Tientsin Times* argued that the money should alleviate Chinese material conditions, despite the fact that “the Hon. Russell violently disagrees with these views.” They argued that “all present troubles in China can be attributed to the lack of rapid transport which has been the golden key to the development of modern industries and commerce.... It would serve the mercantile interest of the Powers in the long run and help China infinitely by turning over the Boxer indemnity to complete communication system commencing with construction of railways in this country.” After the railways were constructed, “the purchasing capacity of the people in the inner parts can be increased, to the eventual benefit of the world commerce.” Russell’s fear, as was the case generally among self-professed anti-imperialists, was that Britain would control these railways and accrue virtually all of its benefits.³⁰⁰

There was also small controversy within the committee itself. Lord Phillimore, who agreed to chair it, later backed out on learning of Russell’s participation in objection to his “highly immoral character.” Phillimore’s resignation, one imagines to his surprise,

299 FO 371/10270 F 2247/174/10. This response was possibly verbal. The written response to Russell was: “I am desired by Mr. Ponsonby to inform you that he understands that Mr. Waterlow has already explained to you the attitude of the Foreign Office as regards the exact form of the Boxer Indemnity Bill.” The memorandum is also reproduced in Russell, *Autobiography*, 363-364. Also see “Fate of Boxer Indemnity: Should be Converted to Educational Use,” *Daily Herald*, July 9, 1924.

300 Article included in FO 371/10270 F 2301/174/10

was accepted by a Labour government that had already formally committed to Russell's participation.³⁰¹ Regarding his replacement, Sidney Waterlow of the Foreign Office wrote that, for political reasons, "it seems to me essential that the chairman should not be a representative of large business interests."³⁰² The *North China Herald* noted these small, unanticipated challenges to progress, writing that "it is only when you get behind the scenes that you appreciate that on Chinese matters, at all events, there are the most violent antagonisms, partly of a personal nature, and partly on broad questions of principle."³⁰³

By September 1924 Russell's general frustration with the new government spilled over into the pages of the *New Leader*, a Labour magazine.³⁰⁴ In the endless foot-dragging, he saw how "British policy in China illustrates some of the difficulties of constitutional as opposed to revolutionary socialism." He didn't blame the Labour government—in fact "I make no doubt that not a single member of the present Government has the least idea of what is being done by British officials in China ... it is impossible for anyone in England, even the Prime Minister, to know the truth about any event in China until six weeks after it has happened." Britain's official reason for taking it slow in China was the need for a stable, nationally supported government to arise there, but for Russell this already existed in Sun Yat-sen's Canton regime. Instead, Sun had "been singled out by the British in Hong Kong for a bitter and unscrupulous enmity." The

301 FO 371/10269 F 1903/174/10

302 FO 371/10270 F 2309/174/10. Lord Buxton would later accept an invitation to chair the committee.

303 "Boxer Indemnity Fight: All Sorts of Views as to How the Money Should be Spent: What is Education?" *North China Herald*, August 16, 1924.

304 Bertrand Russell, "British Imperialism in China: Brigands and British Banks," *New Leader*, September 19, 1924. Also reprinted in the USA as Bertrand Russell, "British Labor and Chinese Brigands," *Nation*, November 5, 1924.

reason, as Russell saw it, was that upon returning to power Sun terminated Britain's recently negotiated Cassell Agreement with Canton, which would have given Britain control of railways and mines in Guangdong. Sun then supported the 1922 shipping strike in Hong Kong, and generally sought to improve Guangzhou's international trade position vis-a-vis Hong Kong. The British smeared Sun as a Communist controlled by Moscow because, according to Russell, subordinate CCP members "mistakenly represent the Canton Government as a proletarian government, engaged in the class war." Russell denied this view as "altogether un-Chinese." Instead, Sun's government was more analogous to that of the Liberal Party in late 19th century Britain, and Sun's chief crime was to desire Canton's independence of action. As for the issue of Weihaiwei, "if Mr. MacDonald and Mr. Ponsonby have ever heard of the question, I am sure their officials in China must have given them a very misleading account of the facts."

By this point it had become clear to Russell that,

in regard to a distant country like China, which is not in the forefront of British politics, we cannot hope to see any policy such as the Labour Party can approve carried out while the Government works through officials who are opposed to all its aims. . . . I do not urge that we should actively support Sun Yat-sen; I urge only that we should be genuinely neutral. It is not desirable to interfere in the internal affairs of foreign countries, even on the right side. At present, in China, we interfere surreptitiously, but always on the wrong side.

Though Russell had been criticizing Western behavior in China for several years, he had yet to focus his criticism so sharply on Britain, let alone under Britain's first Labour government, which presumably would take his criticisms to heart. The *New Leader* article launched Russell's pro-China profile within the Foreign Office and did much to bring the China debate to public attention. In the Foreign Office, Waterlow commented that "I have known Hon. Russell for many years, at certain periods intimately, and I greatly admire his genius. But he has always been a psychological

puzzle to me. How is it possible that a man with his scientifically trained mind should permit himself to write assertively and dogmatically on questions of fact of which he has only the most superficial knowledge?”³⁰⁵ The F.O. worked diligently to arrange for a response by Sir Charles Addis to be published in the *Morning Post*, in which Addis retorted that warlord rivalry is bad for business and Sun was responsible for much of that bloodshed and misery, among other general denials.³⁰⁶ In China, the *North China Herald* would similarly condemn Sun and write that when Russell came to China “he consorted almost exclusively with men of revolutionary disposition.... There have been many false foreign guides to China, but assuredly none more dangerous than this one.”³⁰⁷ The *Peking & Tientsin Times*, as characterized in the *Japan Weekly Chronicle*, also responded with a “calling of names.” But the *JWC* remarked that “naturally the two British editors in China miss the main point of Mr. Russell’s article, [which was] his sympathy with the Labor Government struggling to devise a liberal international policy when the sources of its information” all act to thwart them. “Labor representatives of the type that Mr. Russell seems to have in mind would be but voices crying in the wilderness in a country like China.... They would be helpless unless they had a government at home with the conviction and courage to take a stand against the whole machinery and the very ideal of imperialism.”³⁰⁸

305 FO 371/10244 F 3166/19/10

306 FO 371/10245 F 3353/19/10. The F.O. also scrambled for a response to Russell’s side revelation of Britain’s response to a British activist in Hong Kong who sought an end to the *muitsai* (妹子) system of female servitude, an explosive issue that Russell knowingly referred to as “Chinese slavery,” and which the British technically resolved two years earlier.

307 “False Prophets,” *North China Herald*, September 20, 1924.

308 Reprinted in USA as “Western Imperialism in China,” *Nation*, November 19, 1924. Originally published in the *Japan Weekly Chronicle*. The F.O. would again struggle with Russell’s influence in America a week later, two months after his original article. See FO 371/10298 F 4146/4146/10

MacDonald's Labour government was weak from the start, and only came into being through a coalition with the Liberal Party. Domestic controversies would soon result in another general election being called for November 4, 1924. The "Red Letter" election, so-called because of revelations contained in a (likely forged) letter from the Communist International obtained by the *Daily Mail* five days prior, resulted in a return of the Conservative government under Stanley Baldwin less than a year after their loss of power. Just two days later on November 6, the Foreign Office would discuss the required reintroduction of the Boxer Indemnity Bill, currently marked but not approved for "educational and other cultural purposes," and decide to remove the word "cultural." That word was originally inserted when the term "other purposes" was approved to be added to what was originally only "educational purposes." The fear among Labour was that strong lobbying to use the money for business, especially for the building of railways, would exploit these "other purposes" and dominate the spending. Railways had come to be a symbol of international control in China, particularly after Japan and Russia clashed over them in Manchuria decades earlier. The F.O. noted that "the late administration had intended to accept [the introduction of the word 'cultural'] (so Hon. Ponsonby told me)," but that this "would have debarred the Committee from considering anything except education," hence its quick removal now.

With education reduced in scope, the F.O. also quickly had Russell removed because he "holds views of which the violence is proportionate to his superficial knowledge of China." Lowes Dickinson was also removed, though without the same hostility and probably mainly to avoid charges of targeting Russell. Other civil servants quickly wrote in their support for the move, with one noting for the record that "I tried to

dissuade Mr. Ramsay MacDonald from appointing Mr. Bertrand Russell whom I regarded, and still regard, as absolutely unfit to advise on a question like this.”³⁰⁹

A letter would be sent to Russell on December 11th canceling his invitation. In his place would be appointed Professor W. H. Soothill of Oxford University. As a Professor of Chinese and someone who spent almost 40 years in China as a missionary and then president of the Shansi Imperial University, Soothill was certainly better qualified on paper to serve on the committee. It also helped that he had been agitating for a role with members of the government who were sympathetic to his hawkish views. Soothill emphasized education as a means of control. In July 1924, the F.O. would regret not having offered him a spot after reading his op-ed in the *Times*, which he paired with a long and more candid memo to the government. In the memo, he mentioned the anti-Bolshevik role education could play in China as being “able to INFLUENCE THE ABLEST STUDENTS OF CHINA FOR TWENTY YEARS, perhaps for generations to come.” Regarding this candidness in the memo, Soothill commented that he had “refrained from mentioning these things in my *Times* letter of the 10th, [because] if the idea is adopted the less said about it beforehand the better.” But speed was of the essence —“to get the blow in ‘fast’ has added value.”³¹⁰ Soothill quickly followed this letter with another one starkly outlining Britain’s options: “It is a question for us to decide, in connection with the Boxer Indemnity, whether we want the Bolsheviks, or the Germans to get foreign control of the next generation of Chinese students rather than ourselves.”³¹¹ Now the F.O. could and did appoint him; as for who they wanted to fill the second

309 FO 371/10271 F 3727/174/10

310 FO 371/19270 F 2392/174/10. Capital letters in original.

311 FO 371/19270 F 2465/174/10

vacancy, “would it not be better to ask the Board of Trade to nominate a representative?”³¹²

Russell achieved more for China in his removal from the Boxer committee than his continued inclusion could have. Political delays in returning the money persisted into the 1930s, at which point China’s situation had fundamentally changed and Britain’s opportunity to make a good impression had long since passed—even the fund’s ultimately partial application to railways could no longer do Britain any good.³¹³ On the other hand, the immediate aftershocks of Russell’s high-profile removal would help polarize a broader swath of the British public, draw out the focused and lasting ire of Russell’s pen, and even reach the Chinese making them suspicious of future bad faith from Britain.

Russell would soon write brutally of the British community in China:

The superiority of the white man to the yellow man is accidental, not essential; it ceases as soon as the yellow man has learnt to make bombs and poison gases.... Most of us are not eminent physicists, but are parasites upon the few who are. The ignorant barbarians who ... conduct a leisurely business at Shanghai are protected by cruisers and gun-boats embodying the discoveries of men of science whom they despise.... In virtue of this protection they allow themselves to treat the yellow men with intolerable insolence.³¹⁴

He would write on British policy in China: “While I do not approve of American policy [toward China], I wish to state unequivocally that I disapprove far more of our own policy, which is in every way more reactionary, brutal, and unenlightened.”³¹⁵ He would also condemn the Foreign Office: “Undoubtedly the worst of the government departments

312 FO 371/10272 F 4117/174/10

313 For a contemporary account of this history through the end of 1930, see Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to Parliament by Command of His Majesty, *Papers Regarding the Disposal of the British Share of the China Indemnity of 1901, September 19—November 14, 1930* (London: His Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1930), 2-15. For a modern history, see Frank H.H. King, “The Boxer Indemnity: ‘Nothing but Bad’,” *Modern Asian Studies* 40, no. 3 (July 2006): 663-689.

314 Bertrand Russell, “Asia and the White Man,” *Nation & Athenaeum*, December 6, 1924.

is the Foreign Office.... Inevitably, imperialism, secrecy and chicanery are among the traditions of the office.” For example, Balfour’s promised return of Weihaiwei still “has not been done, and the Labor government was as immovable on the subject as the Conservatives. Prolonged inquiry revealed a probability that the Foreign Office had misled Mr. MacDonald as to the facts of the case.”³¹⁶

The Foreign Office, for their part, was giddy. Reading Russell’s articles and interviews, the F.O. noted that, “like Tweedledee, Mr. Russell, when he is angry seems to hit at everything whether he can see it or not. He is now only proving how unfit he was to serve on the Indemnity Committee, and his statements—and misstatements—may be of use to us if the matter is raised in Parliament.” Another mocked that the “Hon. Russell professes an immense admiration for the spirit of Chinese civilization. But he seems to have forgotten that, according to Confucius, it is a gross breach of good manners to interfere with the actions of officials.”³¹⁷ In response to Ponsonby’s inquiry in Parliament on the reason for the exclusions and his suggestion it was politically motivated, two responses were formulated. Response A contained the explanation that “the two names mentioned stand for a combination of pronounced views and lack of practical experience which, in my opinion, would be an element of weakness.” Response B was the one delivered by Secretary of Foreign Affairs Austen Chamberlain to Parliament: “The reason

315 Bertrand Russell, “A Dawes Plan for China?” *New Leader*, December 26, 1924. The *New Leader* editor would agree with another charge made by Russell, writing “it is probable that the present Government intends to use a large part of the Boxer Indemnity Fund to construct a railway in China under exclusive British control.” The Foreign Office would comment dismissively on this article. See FO 371/10257 F 4385/76/10

316 Bertrand Russell, “British Labor’s Lesson,” *New Republic*, December 31, 1924.

317 FO 371/10927 F 450/13/13. The F.O. was commenting on two articles reproduced in their files. Bertrand Russell, “British Labor’s Lesson,” *New Republic*, December 31, 1924 and Russell’s interview “Baldwin Cabinet Hit for Diverting Boxer Indemnity,” *The New York World*, January 12, 1925. The fact that Confucius was mentioned to expose Russell’s *faux pas* in defending the Chinese, if sincere, shows the F.O.’s distorted view of China in the 1920s.

is that on reconsideration it was found that the composition of the committee—the number of which it is important to keep small—was not sufficiently representative, and, in particular, that it included no member with practical experience of educational organization in China.” Regarding the more direct insult in A, one official wrote “I should love (as the ladies say) to give answer A, but being poor-spirited I take refuge in B.”³¹⁸

The Foreign Office was happy to see Russell go and hoped to keep it that way. When H. A. L. Fisher, who could have doubled as the committee’s second expert on education, wrote the following week to withdraw, the F.O. noted that “this is most unfortunate, as, if & when it becomes known, the agitation over Mr. Bertrand Russell will no doubt be revived, with a view to his appointment to the vacancy.” (An M.P. would be recommended instead.)³¹⁹ It is clear that the Foreign Office was never satisfied with Russell’s inclusion on the committee, and an invitation was only extended to him because of his high esteem among the leaders of the Labour Party.

British correspondents for the *North China Herald* recognized the increased attention now paid to Russell in Britain. The *NCH*’s London correspondent downplayed it in China as “a storm in a tea-cup. Mr. Bertrand Russell is a quite unsuitable man for the Committee. His god, so far as the Far East is concerned, is Sun Yat-sen ... though I should imagine his Bolshevik principles are the ones which Mr. Russell admires more

318 FO 371/10272 F 4305/174/10. “Order for Second Reading Read,” *Hansard* 181, March 3, 1925.

319 FO 371/10272 F 4342/174/10. Within days the one Chinese member, Dr. Wang Chung Hui, would also resign from the committee because of his appointment to a position in the Peking government. To this the F.O. files for March 20, 1925 contain the two remarks: “Tiresome. We shall have to find another suitable Chinese—not an altogether easy task.” “It might be timely to appoint two Chinese members to the Committee instead of one. There has been a good deal of agitation both here and in China in favour of increasing Chinese representation on the Committee. We would show in this way our desire to meet the wishes of the Chinese, and this ought to counteract the mischievous propaganda which has been put abroad in consequence of the Russell-Dickinson affair.” See FO 371/10927 F 1014/13/10.

than any.” On Russell’s accusations of perfidy, they assured those Chinese among its readers that “those who think that the application of the Boxer Indemnity will be much modified by the present Government are under an illusion. There will be no change whatever of this nature.”³²⁰ But enough controversy was being generated that one *NCH* correspondent felt it necessary to write directly to the British press that “Mr. Bertrand Russell, despite his great ability, was only the champion of one form of assistance to education, to the exclusion of everything else, and he has not recommended himself to the Chinese by his perfervid backing of Sun Yat Sen as the only real Chinese patriot. I think it is safe to say that there are very few Chinese or British in the Far East who do not regard Sun Yat Sen as a peril to his country’s interests.”³²¹ Another *NCH* correspondent to the Labour Party, commenting on concerns about warships being dispatched to Shanghai over hints of labor unrest there, wrote that the “propaganda” on this issue “has been so obviously artificial” that he hadn’t yet reported on it, “but the appearance of Mr. Bertrand Russell as an alarmist on the subject is a more important matter. He has sufficient prestige and ability to ensure attention to anything he may write.”³²²

Nevertheless, the dissatisfaction of prominent Chinese with Russell’s removal would quickly reach Britain. P. O. Chen, the Secretary for the Chinese Association for Promotion of Education, wrote the *Manchester Guardian* that “it is disappointing to know that the invitations given to Mr. Bertrand Russell and Mr. Lowes Dickinson to sit on the Committee have been cancelled. Both have a keen interest in Chinese education,

320 “The British Boxer Indemnity: Dismissal of Russell and Lowes Dickenson from Government’s Advisory Committee (Correspondence Dec. 17, 1924),” *North China Herald*, January 17, 1925.

321 Charles Watney, “The Boxer Committee: Letter to the Editor (Dec. 24, 1924),” *Nation & Athenaeum*, January 3, 1925.

322 “A Dawes Plan for China? Mr. Bertrand Russell Tells the British Workers All about It,” *North China Herald*, February 7, 1925.

as shown in their lectures and books, and their services would have been of inestimable value to China in the solution of the gigantic problem of educational development.”³²³ Chen’s separate letter to the government also reached the Foreign Office files, warranting the note that “Prof. Bertrand Russell has been giving air that the present government have decided to spend this money on railway construction. The Chinese student world is inclined to believe Prof. Russell; so perhaps this opportunity should be taken to reassure them.”³²⁴ Cai Yuanpei, then in Brussels, wrote to a paper on behalf of his delegation to “express our opinion as being in absolute agreement with [the paper’s] own attitude towards the question.” He relayed that he had “just received a number of communications from Educational Associations in China ... [and] as the sum involved is not sufficient to produce any effect unless it is undivided, so our educationists cannot welcome any suggested plan as disguised under the name of railway building in the Yangtze region.” Cai remarked on the “enthusiastic approval” across China upon learning of Russell’s invitation to the committee, and reflected how Russell’s year in China was “a rare experience, and his addresses and lectures were astonishingly and highly appreciated.”³²⁵

The British government noted these concerns. Labour M.P. James Hudson observed in a session of parliament that “clearly there is a suspicion in China that by displacing Mr. Bertrand Russell and electing Professor Soothill you are going to have the money spent in a way that will not altogether meet with the approval of the Chinese people.... I believe that unless you can get back on to the Committee men of intellectual eminence who are free from particular interests in the way that Mr. Bertrand Russell and

323 P. O. Chen, “Letter to Editor: The Boxer Indemnity,” *Manchester Guardian*, January 17, 1925.

324 FO 371/10927 F 623/13/10

325 Cai Yuanpei, “Letter to Editor: The Boxer Indemnity Committee,” *Nation & Athenaeum*, January 31, 1925.

Mr. Lowes Dickinson were, you cannot expect to succeed with the Chinese in the main purposes that you are pursuing,” i.e., in gaining China’s goodwill. This change in personnel would not happen, and the indication was that those now in power did not appreciate Hudson’s warning or understand the permanence of China’s new social situation. Conservative M.P. Ronald McNeill would reply to Hudson that Soothill was “one of the best authorities and writers upon Confucius and Confucianism and consequently one who, we may well say, has not only a knowledge of China but is sympathetic to China and the Chinese.”³²⁶

Ultimately, the potential benefits that could have accrued from Russell’s lost opportunity to assist the Chinese on the Boxer Indemnity Committee would pale in significance to the convulsions China experienced over the coming two years, and Britain’s major antagonistic role in that. What would begin as a violent incident between Chinese protesters and British Imperial troops in Shanghai on May 30, 1925 would escalate into a potential war with China at a time when Chiang Kai-shek’s Nationalist army was marching north to unify the country under the late Sun Yat-sen’s Canton regime. Russell’s disillusionment following, first Labour’s failures, and then the government’s inability to control representatives of its own Empire in China would lead to the most vocal, angry and effective period of his support for China.

Russell’s Opposition under a Conservative Government, 1925-1927

The period between March 1925 and April 1927 was the low point in postwar Sino-British relations. To many in Britain, a major war in East Asia seemed at times on the verge of breaking out. While China had many important grievances with Britain since

326 “Order for Second Reading Read,” *Hansard* 181, March 3, 1925.

1919, not until 1925-27 was the actual use of violence introduced by the British side. As Nicholas Clifford writes, “in a country torn apart by violence, where even local military campaigns left thousands dead,” British violence may have been minimal quantitatively speaking, but “it was foreign gunfire ... not Chinese fire ... and that made all the difference.”³²⁷ China pushed back, and a fear of violent outbreaks persisted on both sides. Yet unlike Japan the following decade, Britain’s behavior in China would ultimately be reined in by the London metropole. This section begins with a chronological retelling of key events in China, and Britain’s diplomatic response to them, before returning to a discussion of Britain’s domestic response in more detail with a focus on Bertrand Russell’s activities and influence.³²⁸

Sino-British relations entered a new phase on May 30, 1925. Days earlier, an altercation in a Shanghai factory between Chinese employees and their Japanese employer resulted in one Chinese death. Subsequent demonstrations led to several Chinese arrests, and when a large group gathered outside of the police station in the Shanghai International Settlement on May 30 to demand their release, a nervous British officer ordered colonial police to fire on the crowd, killing and wounding several people. Outrage spread rapidly across China, leading to protests in nearly thirty other cities. During one such rally in Guangzhou on June 23, a large crowd of Chinese gathering by

327 Nicholas R. Clifford, *Spoilt Children of Empire: Westerners in Shanghai and the Chinese Revolution of the 1920s* (Hanover: Middlebury College Press, 1991), 97. Clifford is specifically referring to events in Shanghai on May 30, 1925, but this sentiment characterizes the Chinese perspective throughout the period.

328 For general histories of Sino-British relations of this period, see Fung, *The Diplomacy of Imperial Retreat*, 30-144. Chow, *Britain’s Imperial Retreat from China, 1900-1931*, 147-226. Richard S. Grayson, *Austen Chamberlain and the Commitment to Europe: British Foreign Policy 1924-1929* (London: Routledge, 1997), 170-211. Buchanan, *East Wind*, 22-43. Clifford, *Spoilt Children of Empire*, 97-193.

the foreign concession of Shameen was also fired upon by the British, again killing many.³²⁹

The intensity of China's response to these events is frequently compared with the May Fourth Movement, and indeed the period is now referred to as the May Thirtieth Movement. However, in contrast with May Fourth, which was an intellectual response directed internally, the May Thirtieth response demanded action against Britain—no agonizing debates over problems versus “isms” would ensue. Retaliation came in the form of a massive boycott of British goods, primarily by Canton directed at Hong Kong. The boycott lasted from July 1925 until October 1926 and cut trade approximately in half. Considering that China made up only a small fraction of Britain's total trade—China always attracted attention more for its potential than its actual importance to British interests—the boycott was an effective yet safe strategy to challenge British power. The lengthy negotiations to end the boycott conducted with Eugene Chen in Guangzhou also provided the Guomindang with considerable leverage and an international public spotlight.

However, violent encounters would continue. In August 1926 troops of a local warlord loyal to Wu Peifu seized two British merchant vessels far up the Yangtze River at the town of Wanxian in present-day Chongqing. After quick, ad-hoc efforts at diplomacy failed, naval forces shelled the town on September 5th causing large scale death and destruction. By this time Canton's Nationalist army under Chiang Kai-shek was two months into the process of their Northern Expedition to reunite China under the Guomindang government. In late December 1926 Chiang's troops took Wuhan from Wu

³²⁹ Even contemporary sources frequently disagree on the number of dead and wounded. The consensus scale appears to be that in Shanghai 10 were killed and 20 wounded, while in Guangzhou 50 were killed and 100 wounded.

Peifu. Days later on January 3, celebrating crowds completed the takeover of Wuhan by forcefully occupying the British concession at Hankou. Nationalist troops restored order with no loss of life, but the British who fled to Shanghai were not to return. A similar takeover soon occurred at Britain's concession at Jiujiang in Jiangxi. The peak of the crisis arrived when Nationalist troops reached and took Nanjing from the northern warlords in March 1927, with some British killed and looted in the subsequent confusion. The next logical step, Shanghai, was the red line for Britain. A Shanghai Defense Force had by then been dispatched to ensure the International Settlement remained unharmed, but ultimately a military conflict was avoided after Chiang unexpectedly chose to make a surprise precision attack on the Communists in Shanghai instead.

While a march into Shanghai by the Nationalist army probably would have been the tripwire for war, the many potential red lines that were not drawn by Britain leading up to April 1927 represent the softening in foreign policy that had taken place under the new Conservative government. The primary reason was the effectiveness of the Guomindang regime, which after Sun's death in March 1925 asserted itself more forcefully under the united front of a left-wing personified by Eugene Chen and Russian adviser Mikhail Borodin, and a right-wing led by Chiang Kai-shek. Another important factor was the new "Spirit of Locarno" that pervaded Britain. The Locarno Treaty, negotiated in October 1925 between Britain, France and Germany, removed the specter of war in Europe by pledging its signatories to refrain from military aggression. Its way was paved by the financial resolution under the Dawes Plan the previous year and earned Britain's Secretary of Foreign Affairs Austen Chamberlain a Nobel Peace Prize. With Britain's postwar diplomacy dominated by Europe, many saw the treaty as guaranteeing a generation of peace and viewed any military action in China as a dangerous and

unnecessary misadventure in a distant land that could only disrupt the positive trends in Europe. Russell later conveyed this sentiment in March 1927 in a warning to the Conservative government as British troops sailed for Shanghai: “China is distant, and cannot be made to seem truly menacing. The nation will not therefore throw itself into a struggle in the Far East with the wholeheartedness which it showed during the Great War.”³³⁰

Chamberlain hoped (but unlike his half-brother Neville in 1938, did not say) the Treaty of Locarno would bring “peace in our time.” As for the Far East, he earlier confessed in July 1925 that “my own knowledge of China [is] insufficient to enable me to move with that degree of confidence which I have when taking, or directing, steps in European affairs.”³³¹ The Foreign Office, which thus far had only “confused” Chamberlain with its “babel of tongues” about China, soon sought to replicate in East Asia Chamberlain’s achievements at Locarno. This new conciliatory attitude was helped by some personnel changes in the F.O. and was initiated at the long-promised Customs Tariff Conference that finally convened in October 1925 under Beijing’s warlord and nominal head of state Duan Qirui. Despite this promising start, Duan would fall from power the following April, leaving the Great Powers in the absurd position of continuing their negotiations on China’s tariff autonomy in Beijing with no Chinese representatives present. The stark contrast between the unstable competition among China’s northern warlords and the quickly rising Guomindang in the south led Britain to shift its focus to tempering Canton’s anti-British attitude—the one thing that truly united both wings of the GMD. On December 26, 1926, the British government declared its new China policy in

330 Bertrand Russell, “British Folly in China,” *Nation*, March 2, 1927.

331 Quoted from Grayson, *Austen Chamberlain and the Commitment to Europe*, 170.

the December Memorandum, which acknowledged the validity of nearly all of China's long-standing grievances, agreed that these should be remedied, and "formed the basis of a bipartisan policy towards China for the next ten years." Chamberlain referred to this "Far Eastern Locarno" as "the first attempt to find a policy instead of drifting aimlessly on [the] current which threatens to carry all foreign interests in China to destruction."³³²

While Canton's rising power created the urgency behind a policy reevaluation, Britain's domestic public opinion was key to the softening of the official attitude. To be sure, soon after May 30 regular calls for a more aggressive "British policy in China" were made in recurring articles under that title in the *Times* of London. But the galvanization of public opinion occurred in large part because, as the *Shanghai Times* commented in 1926, the China issue was dominated by the more pacific Labour leaning newspapers through which the increasing public interest in China was primarily directed.³³³ Even in March 1925, months before the unexpected violence on May 30th, Sir Victor Wellesley, a prime mover of China policy in the Foreign Office, believed in the words of Edmund Fung that "unless British life and property were in danger, public opinion at home would not support any military action in distant lands."³³⁴ Two years later, as 20,000 British soldiers sailed to China for the expressed purpose of defending British life and property in Shanghai, Austen Chamberlain wrote the minister in Beijing and fellow delegate at Locarno, Miles Lampson, how "the Great War still haunts every household" in Britain, and the public was afraid and unhappy over the troop deployment. Chamberlain sympathized with Lampson's frustration at London's irresolution because he knew that,

332 Quoted from Fung, *The Diplomacy of Imperial Retreat*, 101-104.

333 Chow, *Britain's Imperial Retreat from China*, 183.

334 Fung, *The Diplomacy of Imperial Retreat*, 64.

being “far away from England and with the constant provocations and outrages of the Chinese ever before your eyes and your ears, you can have no conception how profoundly pacific our people now are.”³³⁵

That the British public should desire accommodation in Europe after the Great War is understandable. But to domestic eyes China was still militarily weak compared with the British Empire—after all, in recent memory China could at best muster a peasant army in the form of the mystical Boxers that Russell himself acknowledged “represented the least civilized and least enlightened elements of their country; they stood solely for the preservation of ancient tradition.”³³⁶ That the British public should balk at using military force in China, and thereby restrain what well into the 1920s was a hawkish Foreign Office spurred on by bellicose treaty port communities, requires explanation. Indeed a common refrain from the treaty ports intended for rebroadcast to the British people was that Young China, represented by the Guomindang, was nothing more than a next-generation Boxer Uprising that could be just as easily and rightfully put down. An important difference from 25 years earlier was that, by this point, an informal “pro-China lobby” had significant traction with the British people to counteract such claims and present China in a more positive light. For his part, Russell continued in the quotation above: “On the other hand, the Kuo Min Tang, the modern nationalist party, consists of the most modern and Westernised people in China.... No unprejudiced person can doubt that the Kuo Min Tang represents all that is best in China, both morally and intellectually; that is why our Foreign Office is itching to destroy it.” Rather than put down Young

335 Chow, *Britain's Imperial Retreat from China*, 220.

336 Bertrand Russell, “The White Peril in China,” *New Leader*; September 17, 1926.

China's "uprising," Britons preferred to suppress the urge instead, and Bertrand Russell had an important role in building that consensus.

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Bertrand Russell's writings took on a graver tone after the May 30th shootings, an event that must have evoked flashbacks to the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo on June 28, 1914. "The first necessity in this Chinese crisis," he cautioned on June 19, "is to be clear about the facts, which have, as usual, been distorted by the Press, the telegraph agencies and the Government." Russell accused the large part of the British press of boycotting the truth and instead choosing to blame Bolshevik propaganda for inciting an unthinking mob. To Russell such talk was nonsense: "The students who demonstrated were the kind of young men and young women of whom I saw a great deal when in China—eager, enthusiastic, idealistic, unable to believe that justice, however clear, is powerless against brute force." Russell hinted at other sources of information, including statements issued by Peking University professors and the "Chinese Information Bureau," that he felt painted a more accurate picture of the current crisis.³³⁷

The statement from Peking University was a 5-page pamphlet called "China's Case," written by Hu Shih, V. K. Ting (Ding Wenjiang), Lo Wen Kan and K. L. Yen. The Foreign Office soon noted its wide distribution in Britain and their knee-jerk reaction was to dismiss it as propaganda. One officer declared it provided "clear proof of the unfitness of the Peking University luminaries to hold any responsible position [on the Boxer Committee], not because of their lack of intelligence or education but because of their intellectual dishonesty." After all, this person wrote, "these are the disciples of Ts'ai Yuan-p'ei, the political associates of Ch'en Tu-hsiu the Communist, and the friends of

337 Bertrand Russell, "The Chinese Amritsar," *New Leader*, June 19, 1925.

Bertrand Russell.” Reference here was being made to Hu and Ding, who Russell ensured were given consideration as China’s representatives on the committee, as well as Lo Wen Kan who was also briefly considered. However, the committee’s chairman Lord Buxton quickly poured cold water over the F.O. by more accurately characterizing the pamphlet as “gentle in temperament” and having “a good deal of truth” in it, according to a subsequent handwritten note relaying this information.³³⁸

The next month on July 18 Russell again referred to the pamphlet, this time by name, writing that “those who wish to see how the matter appears to eminent Chinese intellectuals who are by no means Bolsheviks should obtain a little pamphlet called “China’s Case,” published by the Union of Chinese Associations in Great Britain, and written by four of the leading men in the Chinese academic world—men as learned, as widely travelled, as worthy of scientific respect, as any to be found in England. (I speak from personal knowledge.)”³³⁹ The reverse side of “China’s Case” dates the final draft of this “Manifesto regarding the Shanghai Tragedy” as June 9, just ten days before Russell first referenced it in print, though not by name likely because it hadn’t been distributed yet. Russell’s June 19 article was itself published three weeks before the Foreign Office was alerted to the pamphlet’s circulation according to their files, leading to their response above. Together with his June 19th reference to the “Chinese Information Bureau,” it is clear that Russell was receiving his information immediately and directly from Chinese points of contact in Britain to help inform his own influential articles.

While “China’s Case” was a one-off pamphlet, the Chinese Information Bureau (CIB) represents the major new factor of this period within Britain. Details on the CIB

338 FO 371/10944 F 3033/194/10. A copy of “China’s Case” is included in the files. Ding Wenjiang was not affiliated with Peking University, but the other three were professors there.

339 Bertrand Russell, “British Policy in China,” *Nation & Athenaeum*, July 18, 1925.

are murky, with virtually no known internal documents being preserved; the vast majority of information is to be found in the copious number of entries about its activities in the Foreign Office files, much of it provided by Scotland Yard. As to its origins, in his book on May Fourth Edward Q. Wang writes, in the course of discussing Luo Jialun (罗家伦), a graduate of Peking University in 1919, that “as soon as Luo and his friends heard the news [of the Shanghai shootings] from foreign presses in Paris, they formed the Chinese Information Bureau in England in June 1925, protesting British policy in China and seeking international support for their fellow students back home. Luo rushed to England to take the leadership of the bureau. He dedicated two entire months to the agency in London until it was dismissed in August, due to financial difficulties.”³⁴⁰ The CIB did indeed have financial difficulties by August 1925, but its activities would continue on without Luo.

On June 13, the *Daily Mail* alerted its readers in response to a newly circulating document that “the Chinese Information Bureau is a propaganda organisation which has no connection with the official Chinese departments in London. It came into being only recently, and the native secretary and two clerks have their headquarters in a single room ... lent to them by the occupier, ex-Col. L’Estrange Malone.”³⁴¹ Cecil L’Estrange Malone was a WWI hero, former M.P. and a communist. No written correspondence appears to exist between Russell and Malone, but Russell did receive a letter from Malone’s activist wife in December 1921. Malone followed in Russell’s footsteps by visiting Russia, going

340 Wang, *Inventing China through History*, 135-136.

341 “Zinoviev Again: Reds to Concentrate on Britain,” *Daily Mail*, June 13, 1925. The article later writes how “the sympathy expressed with the Chinese rioters by Socialists in the British Parliament has greatly cheered the students, and such comments, until the full reports are received, are almost criminally undermining the British case.” The document may have been an illustrated sheet head titled “The Peaceful Chinese Patriots died by Barbarous British Hands,” which contained photos from Shanghai.

to prison for an offhand inflammatory comment, and joining the Independent Labour Party. His connection to China appears to be minimal, and the fact that Russell was well loved by the Chinese in Britain and receiving information from the CIB within days of its existence points to the possibility that Russell served as facilitator in pairing an energetic Malone with young Chinese in Britain who funneled information to Malone and his soon-to-be partner Reginald Bridgeman for distribution.

The “native secretary” referred to by the *Daily Mail* was identified in the article as Kia-Luen Lo and he would be frequently referenced in the F.O. files as the main Chinese figure of the CIB. Lo graduated from Peking University in 1920 and went on to study in America, spending time at Cornell, Princeton and Columbia. He was a Russell admirer, surfacing in May 1923 with a long letter published by the *Freeman* in which he expressed how “intensely interested” he was “in what Mr. Bertrand Russell was quoted as saying in a cablegram in the *New York World*” about the Chinese peasant in relation to the Western laborer. Lo deeply respected Russell’s opinions on Chinese civilization, continuing:

That Mr. Russell by profession is a philosopher and by temperament an artist, all those will agree who have read one of his most celebrated essays, ‘A Free Man’s Worship’. I do not write these paragraphs to defend the Chinese peasant, who has no need of defence, but to prevent anyone from misinterpreting Mr. Russell. His interpretation of this Eastern life will haunt the soul and arrest the imagination of the Western working class, when they begin to reflect. This is the message that, to my mind, Mr. Russell, with all his fearlessness and humanitarian spirit, has brought over to Western industrialized populations from the Chinese peasant.³⁴²

As late as November 1926 Scotland Yard was still referring to Bertrand Russell as a prominent member of the CIB,³⁴³ but he had no involvement in its day-to-day operations. Rather, Scotland Yard’s intelligence likely reflects the fact that Russell

342 Lo Kia-Luen, “Letter to the Editor: Learning from the Chinese,” *Freeman*, May 2, 1923. Lo was also referred to as a “Disciple of Cai Yuanpei” by the Foreign Office. See FO 371/11688 F 3519

343 FO 371/11669 F 4821/58/10

remained in close contact with the organization and made use of the information it provided to him. Much of this information, at least initially, was simply pulled from open source materials, either Chinese-language newspaper reports translated by Lo and his assistants, or even facts occasionally pulled from China's English-language publications that were ignored by the British press—Russell noted with irony that “even when [the CIB's] facts are drawn from the *China Year Book* (a British enterprise) they are regarded [in Britain] as biased *ex parte* pleading.”³⁴⁴

One instance of how the Chinese Information Bureau and Russell interacted survives because it came to the attention of the Foreign Office in connection with the “unfitness” of the Peking “luminaries” to serve on the Boxer Committee. In some sense, it also adds to the mystery of Russell's relationship with the organization. On January 22, 1926, the *Daily Herald* reported that “the Chinese members of the Boxer Indemnity Commission have still not been nominated. I understand that the Chinese Government recommended two distinguished Chinese scholars—Dr. Hu Shih, the philosopher, and Dr. V. K. Ting, the geologist. The British Government refused to accept either, on the ground that they signed telegrams protesting against the Shanghai massacre [‘China's Case’].” Russell was cited as the source, and the paper agreed with his statement that “it is a gratuitous insult to China, showing once more that our Government is too insane to make any attempt to recover the China trade.”³⁴⁵ Incidentally, notable in this statement is Russell's use of the framing process mentioned previously—trade was not his concern,

344 Bertrand Russell, “Fair Play for the Chinese,” *Daily Herald*, July 18, 1925. For a discussion of the facts referenced by CIB from the *China Year Book*, see “Shanghai's Sweatshops: British Capitalists' Claims to Benevolence Refuted,” *Daily Herald*, June 23, 1925.

345 “A Clumsy Insult,” *Daily Herald*, January 22, 1926. In Hu's case, the feedback from Britain's office in Peking to the F.O. was that he was a “brilliant and outstanding figure in educational circles” but that “his selection would probably evoke criticism by treaty port public opinion on account of his advanced views.” See Telegram from Mr. Plairet (Peking) in FO 371/10927 F 1620/13/10.

but he believed it to be the most effective justification to those he was trying to persuade. This also held for his future discussion of Shanghai's factories, choosing to emphasize the damage that China's poor labor conditions did to Britain's own global manufacturing competitiveness.

The Foreign Office confirmed that Russell's information came from the CIB, and when their words alone proved insufficient, they invited William Ewer, the left-wing journalist at the *Daily Herald*, to their office to show him papers "proving that the names of Ting and Hu Shih had been suggested on April 6, 1925, that informal approaches had been made to them on Nov 23, 1925, formal instructions for issue of invitation had been sent on Dec 7 [and] on Jan 7 Ting and Hu Shih had accepted." The F.O. concluded that "Mr. Ewer was entirely satisfied and stated he would inform Bertrand Russell that he had actually seen the papers." They believed "the incident will not cure Bertrand Russell of his complex, but it will serve to make him and Mr Ewer shy of accepting information supplied by the Chinese Information Service [*sic*]."³⁴⁶

Indeed, the indicated documents are there in the Foreign Office files, and on January 26 the *Daily Herald* published a retraction: "I am very glad to be able to state authoritatively that the report that the British Government had rejected a Chinese proposal that Dr. Hu Shih and Dr. V. K. Ting should serve on the Boxer indemnity committee is not only untrue, but the exact reverse of the truth."³⁴⁷ Scotland Yard reported that CIB's Bridgeman ("Malone's henchman") later told Russell that "on the publication of your criticism of its policy the Foreign Office hastened to reply to the suggestion of the Chinese Government, and is consequently able to repudiate the suggestion that it had

346 FO 371/11668 F 429

347 "The Boxer Committee," *Daily Herald*, January 26, 1926.

rejected the Chinese proposal. It remains to be seen whether the two gentlemen who have been designated will accept the appointment.” Ewer almost certainly reported the true timeline to Russell (though apparently not to the CIB with which he likely had no contact), including the fact that the invitations were already accepted. It would have been clear to Russell that Bridgeman was either lying or making a weak attempt to explain away out of embarrassment what Ewer had learned. On February 12, Ewer telephoned the F.O. to say that he received a long letter in which Russell conceded that “it is obvious that the information of my friends is thoroughly untrustworthy.”³⁴⁸

But there is still ambiguity as to Russell’s true thoughts. Ewer’s call would not come until the day after the government officially announced Hu and Ding’s participation to the public, over two weeks after his retraction in the *Daily Herald*.³⁴⁹ The call was therefore probably timed to coincide with this official announcement in order to provide closure to the affair. Despite getting “caught” spreading what turned out to be false information, it is difficult to know Russell’s reaction, or even if the whole event was simply intended put the F.O.’s feet to the fire on publicly naming Hu and Ding. Ewer is now known to have assisted with Soviet espionage in the early 1920s and may have had no qualms feeding information to the government on behalf of Bertrand Russell, such as his statement about the CIB’s trustworthiness—Russell’s “long letter” to Ewer is not contained in the Russell Archives at McMaster University, though it could have been lost.³⁵⁰ In the final analysis, the process of naming the Chinese members of the committee

348 FO 371/11668 F 429/58/10

349 “Hu, Wang and Ting to Sit on Indemnity Committee (Reuter’s, Feb. 11),” *China Press*, February 13, 1926.

350 See Boris Volodarsky, *Stalin’s Agent: The Life and Death of Alexander Orlov* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 538 n. 36. By the Cold War Ewer had turned into an anti-Soviet member of the Labour Party. The searchable Russell Archives is here: <https://bracers.mcmaster.ca/> Another possibility is

was incredibly slow—ten months were needed simply to move from the formal suggestion of Hu and Ding on April 6 to the announcement of their participation on the committee the following February 11, while new British members were rapidly coming and then going as their other commitments arose. Previous governmental delay tactics must have been flashing before Russell’s eyes: the fact that Weihaiwei had still not been returned despite Balfour’s promise to do so at the Washington Conference years earlier, the fact that drawing out time allowed for non-educational purposes to make their way into the Indemnity Bill, the fact that Russell was removed from the Boxer committee by the F.O. at their first opportunity, and the fact that the prolonged inquiry into the May 30th shootings had by now demonstrated to Russell that the process would lead nowhere. He may have known that Bridgeman’s explanation was wrong, but even in his autobiography decades later he made sure to include a short digression in which he claimed that MacDonald’s Labour government “consented to our recommendation of V. K. Ting and Hu Shih,” but when the Conservatives returned to power “they would not accept either,” only to be overruled because “the Chinese Government replied that it desired the two Chinese whom I had recommended and would not have anyone else.” This apparent non-sequitur in his autobiography—these are the only mentions of Ding and Hu—perhaps reflects Russell’s desire to have the final word on an episode that stuck in his memory as being representative of Britain’s insincerity when claiming to do right by China.³⁵¹ Whether or not the CIB got every single fact right was perhaps immaterial to

that Russell suspected his mail was being read and delivered certain letters by hand. Scotland Yard did extensive domestic spying on the CIB.

351 Russell, *Autobiography*, 348. MacDonald’s consent to Hu and Ting must have been informal, since no documentation about this appears to exist in the F.O. files—adding a second Chinese member was not formally considered until after the Conservatives returned to power. Russell concluded this brief discussion of the Boxer Indemnity affair stating that “this put an end to the very feeble efforts at securing Chinese friendship. The only thing that had been secured during the [previous] Labour period of friendship

Russell because, in light of the “facts” being presented by the government and other traditional news sources, the purpose that the CIB was serving was good.

As previously mentioned, a fledgling CIB faced serious financial difficulties within months of its formation, but it would maintain a financially precarious existence until it lost steam after Chiang’s April purge. By 1927, the CIB had a few “voluntary” subscribers who Malone described to the *Daily Mail* as feeling “that the people in this country were very ignorant of affairs in China.”³⁵² As for the CIB’s early days, the *Chinese Students’ Monthly* reproduced a letter written by Malone on July 30, 1925 requesting donations and reporting on their success thus far:

In the past month there have been 75 questions dealing with China in the British House of Commons. Of these 53 were ‘inspired’ by the Chinese Information Bureau. Also we have placed over 40 articles in the press [such as] Manchester Guardian, Daily Herald, Labour Monthly, New Leader, Foreign Affairs, Sunday Worker.... Another side of our work has consisted in distributing some 57,000 pamphlets about China and many thousands of typewritten notes for speakers.³⁵³

Even allowing for possibly generous counting methods, the CIB was already having an impact on the direction of public discourse in Britain early on in its existence. Between December 1925 and June 1926 it would produce at least thirteen substantial “bulletins” containing largely pro-GMD information gathered from China for use by the British press and sympathetic M.P.’s. (The fifth bulletin provided the “information” Russell passed on to the *Daily Herald*.) In December 1926, Scotland Yard responded to a request by colonial authorities for information about the CIB by informing them that “its bulletins

was that Shantung should become a golf course for the British Navy and should no longer be open for Chinese trading.”

352 “Friends of Mr. Chen,” *Daily Mail*, January 27, 1927. While he declined to say who, he denied Soviet involvement. Instead, the paper implied that the CIB’s known contacts with Eugene Chen meant that the GMD was providing financial support.

353 See the *Chinese Students’ Monthly* 21, no. 4 (February 1926): 80.

were widely circulated [in Britain] and were often made the basis for opposition questions in Parliament.”³⁵⁴ It is clear that Russell’s repeated calls for a conduit by which uncensored information could flow directly from China into the British press and Parliament finally had an answer in the small Chinese Information Bureau.³⁵⁵

With a steady stream of information arriving from China that he considered at least more trustworthy than the usual sources, Russell wrote with confidence his own version of events in China that sharply counteracted the traditional news sources. In the case of the *Times*, a paper he viewed as being in close sympathy and contact with the government, his challenge was often direct. Russell observed that “what has been happening recently in China appears to have taken our governing classes by surprise. The *Times* on July 3 began a leading article with the words: ‘something quite new is happening in China’. Those who have taken the trouble to study modern China are not in any degree surprised by recent events.” Now that China could no longer be ignored by the British public, Russell argued that the Chinese side of the story was being suppressed, and “any suggestion that the Chinese have a point of view is treated as treachery.” The British could do well with less chauvinism, Russell cautioned, because treating “Chinese nationalism as a crime is both ridiculous and short-sighted.”³⁵⁶ He next called out a *Times*

354 FO 371/11669 F 5075

355 Examples of Russell’s call for the Labour Party to find better information sources are in Russell, “Chinese Problem” (1922) and Russell, “British Labor’s Lesson” (1924). As an aside, the CIB was also responsible for creating the legend that the sign “Chinese and Dogs Not Admitted” was hung in Shanghai’s Huangpu Park. See Chinese Information Bureau, *How Foreigners Live and Carry on Trade in China* (London: Chinese Information Bureau, July 14, 1925). For discussion, see Robert A. Bickers and Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom, “Shanghai’s ‘Dogs and Chinese not Admitted’ Sign: Legend, History and Contemporary Symbol,” *China Quarterly*, 142 (1995): 444-466. In 1926, Malone also embarked on a six month trip to China, after which he published the long report of his findings in Col. C. L’Estrange Malone, *New China: Report of an Investigation* (London: Independent Labour Party Publication Department, September 1926). Unlike Russell’s visit, Malone was closely monitored by the F.O. in China because of their fear over what impact he would have on Anglo-Chinese relations.

356 Bertrand Russell, “Deliver China from Her Bondage: Peace or Shame for Britain,” *New Leader*, July 10, 1925.

article of July 11 as likely conveying the views of the Foreign Office when it argued that “it has become obviously necessary to assure our naval strength in the Pacific, since the Chinese crisis is only a prelude to further complications in which British interests in the Pacific are vitally concerned,” and Japanese and American assistance is not to be expected. Russell sought to arouse public fear by concluding that “these words must be taken to mean that our Government contemplates fighting China and Russia simultaneously without securing any allies.” He wished instead to suggest reasons why a belligerent East Asian policy was undesirable. The Shanghai shooting, he said, was committed “by an official in a state of nerves” and could be easily resolved, but rather than help the Chinese obtain justice, the British government was only increasing their enmity by obstructing an impartial, external investigation into the facts. As with its return of the Boxer Indemnity, the British government was shooting itself in the foot.³⁵⁷ Russell again condemned a *Times* article of August 20 in which their Peking correspondent wrote how “extremists” were representing the Treaty system as oppressive to China, and then dismissively concluded that “so it might be said of all the nursery rules imposed upon children by their elders.” Russell reacted with disgust; “the Chinese are not children and it is not practice in nurseries to shoot children in the back with rifle bullets. Our rich men must learn to treat the Chinese justly and as equals, or must put up with losing their money,” referring here to the boycott.³⁵⁸

357 Bertrand Russell, “British Policy in China,” *Nation & Athenaeum*, July 18 1925. Russell was soon receiving more confirmation of this from Chinese Minister of Justice S.C. Chang (to public controversy), who telegraphed Russell, along with Ramsay MacDonald and others, to declare that the Shanghai Mixed Court investigating the shooting has no legal foundation and was preventing the Chinese Court from holding a judicial inquiry. See *Reuters*, August 18, 1925 report reproduced in *NCH* on August 22, 1925.

358 Bertrand Russell, “China Asserts Herself: Imperialism in a Quandary,” *New Leader*, August 28, 1925.

The *North China Herald* may have continued on in its usual contemptuous vein, writing how “no sensible person in China wastes time, under ordinary conditions, in replying to Mr. Russell,” but that the *NCH* would do so this time because “when the *Nation & Athenaeum* publishes an article by him, it cannot go unnoticed,”³⁵⁹ but in fact the British government, as previously discussed, was undergoing a crisis of policy and Russell was at the forefront in putting on maximum pressure. Russell’s *New Leader* article in August 1925 about Hong Kong’s competition with Guangzhou as a trade port in particular struck a raw nerve with the Foreign Office, which drafted an 11-page double-spaced memo in response and passed it around to two other government offices for notes. The F.O. was reassured that they “were taking Bertrand Russell too seriously” and it was not necessary to publish a reply to him in the British press, but the F.O. knew that times were changing. They replied, perhaps disingenuously, that their long point-by-point rebuttal was simply written “to help us clear our own minds: it was not intended as a piece of advocacy.”³⁶⁰

That Russell’s name was popping up in the F.O. in the context of China’s internal affairs must also have been cause for concern. For example, one translated excerpt from a treatise written by Wu Peifu’s confidential adviser concluded that “the teachings of Karl Marx and Bertrand Russell” was one of three causes of the disturbance in Shanghai.³⁶¹

359 “Another Slander,” *North China Herald*, September 5, 1925. *NCH* closed the article with: “The rest of Mr. Russell’s article is unimportant. It describes his ideas of what British policy in China should be.”

360 FO 371/10957 F 5210/5210/10. A second editorial article from the American *New Republic* that sounded very much like Russell was also considered, since it showed that discussion about Hong Kong’s negative impact on Guangzhou’s (and therefore the Canton government’s) ability to develop as a center of trade had broken wide open. See “Drifting Toward Disaster in China,” *New Republic*, September 9, 1925.

361 FO 371/10924 F 5140/2/10. The letter informing the F.O. was dated August 31, 1925. The translated treatise title was “A Stable Government for China.” The three causes were: 1) The breaking up of the equality of European Powers after the great War. 2) The teachings of Karl Marx and Bertrand Russell, and 3) Bolshevik propaganda work.

Another person reported from China that “the Chinese, backed by their Russian friends, know exactly how far they can go, and every speech by Bertrand Russell and men of his type makes it harder for us here.”³⁶² The F.O. also likely saw published letters such as the one to the *Times* from a businessman in China who was frustrated with Britain’s lack of action and voiced disappointment with the useless “platitudes” that filled a speech delivered recently by the F.O.’s close confidant Sir Charles Addis, from “whom one might anticipate something more useful and constructive than the sentimental ravings of the Hon. Bertrand Russell.”³⁶³ While the advocates for Empire were failing to effectively counteract people like Bertrand Russell in the West, Russell’s voice also still had some resonance with a Chinese audience. This is perhaps best symbolized by his inclusion as the sole non-Chinese author in the 15-article anniversary booklet “May 30th Memorial (五卅纪念)”, which was published and distributed by Canton in 1926.³⁶⁴

Russell was pleased to see this shift in momentum within Britain and China. He must have concurred with the *Times* analysis that “the troubles that are damaging British and almost all other foreign interests are the various manifestations of a growing Chinese national consciousness,” despite his completely different reaction to it.³⁶⁵ He remarked that “it has come as a surprise to the British in China to find that it is more difficult than it used to be to suppress the demand for justice towards China.”³⁶⁶ China’s growing national consciousness was a positive development because he believed that world peace was

362 FO 371/11658 F 2442/10/10. Letter from Sgt. Robert W. Swallow.

363 “Letters to the Editor. British Policy in China. An Impression from Swatow,” *Times* (London), February 13, 1926. Recall that Addis was called on by the F.O. to respond in print to Bertrand Russell’s 1924 article “British Imperialism in China: Brigands and British Banks” in *New Leader*.

364 *Wusa jinian* 《五卅纪念》 [May 30th Memorial] (Guangdong: Guoli Guangdong mishuchu chubanshe, 1926). Russell’s article was a translation of his *New Leader* article of June 19, 1925. He was likely unaware that this was done.

365 “British policy in China,” *Times* (London), September 5, 1925.

impossible until every race could defend itself—even more effective than exhorting the strong to behave well, he thought, was to help the weak become strong.³⁶⁷ However, Russell was aware of the difference between self-respect and hyper-nationalism. At the annual dinner of the Central Union of Chinese Students in Great Britain and Ireland, Russell spoke of the recent increase in nationalism as being good from China's standpoint, but "the spirit of nationalism" does not always have "good foundations." China could see nationalism's effects in Europe and Russell expressed his hope that it would not produce the same bad results in China.³⁶⁸ In the other direction, he repeated his belief that Britain could learn from peace-loving countries such as China. He railed against Britain's rigorous regime of patriotism in education, which he saw as intended to mentally prepare the young for war during peacetime. He wrote that "the Labour Party would do well to tackle the teaching of so-called 'patriotism,' not only in elementary schools, but also in middle and upper class schools." In Russell's eyes, Denmark and China were the only civilized countries in which patriotic education was not employed and he hoped Britain would follow these two examples.³⁶⁹

366 Bertrand Russell, "What is Happening in China?" *Socialist Review*, March 1926. Russell elaborated that "it is true, of course, that much of the European oppression in China is justified by treaties," but "to attempt to hold modern China to these old treaties is like demanding of a grown-up man that he shall be crippled for life by a contract made with a moneylender while he was a minor. In this case the [British] Courts recognise the invalidity of the contract; but in international affairs there is no analogous mechanism."

367 "Exhort the Weak to Become Strong: Mr. Bertrand Russell's View of Race Problems," *Manchester Guardian*, December 17, 1925. In the meeting's resolution, drafted by Russell at request of the UDC, the Conservative government was nevertheless called on to revise its policy on the unequal treaties, the Boxer Indemnity, Shanghai's factory conditions and the customs tariff.

368 "Wells Apologizes for Acts of His Countrymen in China," *Japan Times & Mail*, November 29, 1925. Russell also spoke of his unforgettable experience in China as being one of the happiest years in his life, and believed that between China and Europe "each had in its culture something which the other would be the better for assimilating."

369 Russell, "Now is the Time!" *No More War*, October 1925.

By 1927, a patchwork of movements had formed within Britain to argue on behalf of China from multiple angles. Russell joined the “British Labour Council for Chinese Freedom” as a founding member—yet another organization intended to bring pressure on the British government and provide an alternate representation of Britain abroad through their communication with Eugene Chen, now in Wuhan. As mentioned, the Union for Democratic Control (UCD) that Russell helped found extended its antiwar mission into peacetime, often by focusing on the flash-point of China. The massive Trades Union Council (TUC) argued from a labor standpoint that 19th century-style factory conditions in China, replete with long hours and child labor, was not only unjust to the Chinese, but bad for the competitiveness of the British worker in Lancashire. (Russell often sought to legitimize China’s nascent labor movement to a British public that had difficulty visualizing anything other than rural peasants.³⁷⁰) During a dinner commemorating the 1911 revolution at which Russell was present, George Hicks, leader of TUC, called for a “Hands off China” movement to be started.³⁷¹ The idea quickly took off, with rallies regularly occurring throughout Britain by early 1927. Russell observed how “enormous and enthusiastic meetings are being held in every part of the country demanding the recall of the expeditionary force,” while at the same time British expatriates in China are ignorant of China’s growing political consciousness, and feelings against China in Britain are confined to the “Die-Hard” section of the Conservative Party.³⁷² At one “Hands off

370 See “A Dawes Plan for China? Mr. Bertrand Russell Tells the British Workers All about It,” *North China Herald*, February 7, 1925. Bertrand Russell, “The Chinese Amritsar,” *New Leader*, June 19, 1925. Bertrand Russell, “Deliver China from Her Bondage,” *New Leader*, July 10, 1925. “China Protest Demonstration: Mr. Bertrand Russell on the New Movement,” *Manchester Guardian*, March 14, 1927.

371 FO 371/11669 F 4821/58/10 Report from Scotland Yard. Russell also spoke at TUC meeting on February 12, 1927 about Chinese labor and war prevention to 583 delegates. See “A Spirited Note of Warning,” *Daily Herald*, February 14, 1927.

372 Bertrand Russell, “British Folly in China,” *Nation*, March 2, 1927. Russell recounted hearing the British diplomat Archibald Rose, speak for an hour on China, and “he never even mentioned the

China” rally in March 1927, Russell, as its chief speaker, told his audience in the words of the *Manchester Guardian* that “we had proved to the Chinese over and over again that we would respect absolutely nothing except force, and that until the Chinese people could exert force they had no hope of getting justice from the predatory capitalism of the West”³⁷³—note again Russell’s use of framing; the “only respects force” trope was long a common refrain of the West in regards to their actions in China.

Before Chiang’s purge of the Communists in Shanghai fundamentally altered the public debate, much organized activity was taking place in Britain for the purpose of severely limiting any aggressiveness in policy. But even as it was achieving major successes towards this end with Chamberlain’s increasingly conciliatory policy that culminated in the December Memorandum, in the months leading up to April 1927 the evolving “China lobby” developed its own internal split. On one side were those who trusted in the Conservative government’s new promise to treat China fairly. On the other was Russell and the more radical elements of British Labour. In September 1926, Russell painted China’s current predicament in very clear, broad strokes for the readers of the Labour Party’s *New Leader* magazine:

The extent to which China has been deprived of independence is not always realized. Let us illustrate it by an analogy. Suppose the Germans had won the war, and had compelled us to sign a treaty giving them the City of London, control of the railway from London to Harwich, the right to garrisons at Reading and Oxford as ‘Treaty Ports’, the exclusive administration of the business quarters in Glasgow, Liverpool, Southampton, with a score of other ports, and the right to determine import duties, collect the customs, and hand over the proceeds only to such Governments as they approved of, and to decide all disputes between Germans and British by German Courts. This would represent fairly accurately the state of affairs which Europe and Japan

massacres of Shanghai, Shameen, and Wanh sien.” When Russell questioned him on this afterwards, “he said that he did not consider they had been an important factor.” This article again pushed the F.O. into action to counteract “the activities of a well-known mischief-maker.” See FO 371/12442 F 2339/102/10.

373 “China Protest Demonstration: Mr. Bertrand Russell on the New Movement,” *Manchester Guardian*, March 14, 1927.

have created in China. I think that even the present Cabinet and Foreign Office would be found among the patriots if that were the condition of England.³⁷⁴

With this being the reality, Russell argued, simply adopting a more conciliatory diplomatic tone went nowhere near righting such wrongs. It would rather be better for the Labour Party to “make an emphatic gesture to dissociate itself from reckless imperialism,” by completely breaking with the government on matters of Empire. Instead, it appeared that the desire for “continuity of foreign policy ... has received some support from nominal adherents of the Labour Party.” This collaboration was “a Satanic principle, which no humane person can tolerate for a moment.”

One of these “nominal adherents” was the Labour Party’s leader Ramsay MacDonald, who although agreeing to speak at a large “Hands off China” rally held in Royal Albert Hall on February 6, 1927, did not oppose sending troops to Shanghai, believing it was justified in light of the government’s new policy and its professed good intentions. Some of the left-leaning press sided with this view of multi-party cooperation as a means for more effective restraint. Russell spoke for the other faction in his letter to the *Nation & Athenaeum* when he charged that “the dispatch of the large forces that have gone to China is not only likely, but probably intended, to provoke a war between us and the Chinese” and many were being lured in by the Conservative government. The paper itself, he pointed out, had just been “urging the Government to explain the Wanhsien incident. No English explanation has been given; and now you speak of the necessity of large forces in order to avoid a ‘repetition of the Wanhsien fiasco’.” Russell feared that, should a gun misfire and a British soldier be killed, those same urges that led to war in 1914 would return and Britain would plunge into war after accusing the Chinese of being

374 Bertrand Russell, “The White Peril in China,” *New Leader*, September 17, 1926.

first to cross the line. To the contrary, Russell said, the Chinese “are a model of sweet reasonableness, in comparison with what the English would be like, had Chinese gunboats sailed up the Thames for a lark and bombarded Reading and Oxford,” as was done by the British at Wanxian. Russell predicted that telegraph agencies would soon be manufacturing news about “riots in Shanghai.”³⁷⁵

The editor of the *Nation & Athenaeum* responded by noting that Russell’s letter was dated before a recent speech at Birmingham by Austen Chamberlain, at which the Associated Press reports he “declared that Great Britain was prepared for a change in all points desired by China—extraterritoriality, the tariff and the quasi-independent status of the concessions. On all these points the present system, he contended, was antiquated [and] unsuited to modern conditions.”³⁷⁶ After reading Chamberlain’s speech, the paper asked, does Russell still suggest the Shanghai Defense Force was intended to “provoke a war”? Perhaps Russell gave his reply at the March 1927 “Hands off China” rally when he said that Austen Chamberlain may have made “vague promises” of peace and conciliation in his December Memorandum, but “the Chinese were more inclined to think of the troops that were being sent out than to feel grateful for the promises.” Britain’s previous broken promises “did not encourage the Chinese to pay much attention to mere words.” It would likely come as no surprise to Russell that not until the Second World War would Britain follow through on Chamberlain’s promises when it signed a treaty with the Guomindang in January 1943 formally ending their special rights in China.³⁷⁷ With the

375 Bertrand Russell and Dora Russell, “Letter to the Editor: Force in China,” *Nation & Athenaeum*, February 5, 1927.

376 *New York Herald Tribune*, January 30, 1927.

377 See K. C. Chan, “The Abrogation of British Extraterritoriality in China 1942-43: A Study of Anglo-American-Chinese Relations,” *Modern Asian Studies* 11, no. 2 (1977): 257-291. Weihaiwei would also not be returned until April 1930.

April 1927 purge in Shanghai taking the world by surprise, we will never know how peaceful Britain would have been in the coming months with 20,000 soldiers now stationed at Shanghai, regardless of its professed intentions.

This late split in the pro-China activities of the British Left can be likened to the split within the GMD, in that all parties still agreed on what was ultimately desirable for Anglo-Chinese relations. The infighting that occurred within British Labour was on how best to fulfill their shared objective of returning sovereignty to the Chinese. As with the GMD, in which the Communist faction took a more belligerent stance towards Britain, Russell's faction would not settle for half-measures. Rather, he always kept front and center the fact that "the ideal to be aimed at in regard to China was that there should be no foreigners there except with the consent of the Chinese, and even they should have no special rights at all."³⁷⁸ Russell, seeing how far this was from the status quo, could not be pleased with any actions by the government that did not produce tangible changes on the ground. But after the Shanghai purge in April 1927 it would be Chiang Kai-shek who decided to be more accommodating in order to shore up his own power base. In this new period of Anglo-Chinese relations that ushered in the "Nanjing Decade," the voice of Bertrand Russell, for all its importance in helping create the conditions in Britain that facilitated the GMD's rise to national power, no longer had relevance.

378 See "Union of Democratic Control in London Raps British Policy in China," *China Press*, December 15, 1925.

Chapter 5

Conclusion—Bertrand Russell Rehabilitated as a “Friend of China”

After April 1927 Bertrand Russell stopped writing about current events in China. In the mid-20s it had seemed to him “as if China were on the eve of a real regeneration. But their rupture in 1927, which was due to faults on both sides, destroyed the last hope of swift recovery.”³⁷⁹ In the mid-30s he recalled in a letter that he had “lost the desire to befriend the Chinese Government in 1927,” since it “became apparent that internal dissensions would continue to make China powerless, and the brutalities of the suppression of the Communists disgusted me.”³⁸⁰ By this point the feeling was mutual; Russell’s books were banned by the Guomindang according to Edgar Snow, the American journalist who wrote sympathetically about the CCP.³⁸¹

There appears to have been no significantly kinder feelings towards Russell within the CCP either. This was perhaps a natural result of Russell’s criticism of Bolshevism and his consistent earlier praise of the GMD using more moderate language and occasionally translated for publication in Chinese newspapers, such a 1926 translation of a 1924 article in which Russell wrote that the “Communists mistakenly represent the Canton Government as a proletarian government, engaged in the class war. This view is altogether un-Chinese.... The outlook of Sun-Yet-Sen and his Government is

379 Bertrand Russell, “A Weekly Diary,” *The New Statesman and Nation*, June 1, 1935.

380 Letter from Bertrand Russell to Reginald Bridgeman, June 23, 1935.

381 Edgar Snow, “The Ways of the Chinese Censor,” *Current History*, July 1, 1935.

more analogous to that of our Liberals of forty years ago.”³⁸² In January 1927 the Soviet adviser Mikhail Borodin would disingenuously state during an interview in Wuhan that “the Chinese wanted material prosperity,” and while “Bertrand Russellism was all very well, [the] Chinese did not want to remain a picturesquely backward people for the benefit of tourists.”³⁸³ Since Russell did not support violent revolution in China, Borodin was dusting off the old charge that he instead thought the Chinese should preserve their national essence.

Russell’s criticism of Communism deepened in the 1930s in response to Stalin’s Soviet Union. He wrote in 1934 that “I am completely at a loss to understand how it came about that some people who are both humane and intelligent could find something to admire in the vast slave camp produced by Stalin,” referring to the forced imprisonment of over one million ethnic Ukrainian minorities. In explaining why he was not a Communist, Russell reasoned that “in relation to any political doctrine there are two questions to be asked: (1) Are its theoretical tenets true? (2) Is its practical policy likely to increase human happiness? For my part, I think the theoretical tenets of Communism are false, and I think its practical maxims are such as to produce an immeasurable increase of human misery.”³⁸⁴ In 1935, when the Communist and former Chinese Information Bureau

382 Bertrand Russell, “British Imperialism in China,” *New Leader*, September 19, 1924. This article was reprinted in China as “Yingguo zai hua de diguo zhuyi 英国在华的帝国主义,” *Xinsheng* 《新生》1926年 第1卷 第3其.

383 “The Crisis in China,” *North China Herald*, January 29, 1927. The reason for Borodin’s statement seems unclear. He was arguing that capitalism must take hold in China in order for it to be quickly overthrown according to Marxist dogma. The *Japan Weekly Chronicle* wrote that “This is the merest cynicism. Because Mr. Bertrand Russell suggested the possibility of a happier destiny for China,” Borodin therefore made this claim about Russell; since Russell didn’t call for violent revolution in China, he therefore wanted China to remain a museum. The point seemed to be to delegitimize ‘Russell’s doctrine’ of Socialism, as Mao phrased it in 1921. See “News and Views from China,” *Japan Weekly Chronicle*, February 10, 1927.

384 Bertrand Russell, “Why I Am Neither a Communist Nor a Fascist,” *New Britain*, January 31, 1934.

member Reginald Bridgeman asked him to sign a declaration against foreign intervention in China that deliberately avoided mention of Russia as one of China's violators, he responded "I suppose your view is that, if none of the Western Powers interfere, Russia will be able to keep the Chinese Communists from being defeated by Nanking; that is to say, you want Russia alone to 'interfere in the internal struggle of the Chinese people'. This is a natural view for a Communist, but not for anyone else."³⁸⁵ Russell ideally wanted China to be left alone, but now in 1935 he saw Japan as being so dangerous that only American intervention, which was clearly not forthcoming, could remedy the problem without having to resort to another World War in which he assumed Germany and Japan would be allied.

Russell's criticisms of the Soviet system transferred to China after the CCP came to power on the mainland in October 1949. He again declined an invitation from Bridgeman in December 1949, this time to contribute to a conference held in England in support of the new regime, expressing his doubt that he would sympathize with the aims of the conference.³⁸⁶ In 1951 he wrote that "I find it quite impossible to believe that so skeptical and rational a race as the Chinese will long continue to submit to a foreign dogmatic orthodoxy." Instead, in contrast to Young China 25 years earlier, he saw in the CCP a new anti-foreign Boxer Uprising that would turn on the Soviets should they treat China as a satellite: "great nations do not remain mad forever.... I think there is every reason to hope that their present mood will not last." Russell felt sure that the day would come when the People's Republic of China (PRC) "will disappoint the Russians by their

385 Letter from Bertrand Russell to Reginald Bridgeman, June 23, 1935.

386 Letter from Bertrand Russell to Reginald Bridgeman, October 27, 1949.

sanity.”³⁸⁷ This was one seemingly rare prediction of Bertrand Russell’s that would not be borne out; instead, he came to see the People’s Liberation Army’s presence in Tibet as an “imperialist” force—“no more of a ‘liberation army’ than had been the British forces in India,”³⁸⁸ and would write to a friend about his desire “to find out what the Communists are doing to Chinese scholars and persons of learning generally. The process which is called ‘brain washing’ seems to me unspeakably horrible.”³⁸⁹

Inside the PRC of the 1950s, Bertrand Russell was simply the occasional collateral damage of the scattershot attacks regularly launched in the pages of *Renmin Ribao* (人民日报, or *People’s Daily*). It was a Mad Libs of invective. He was a “running dog” of the imperialists, “senile” for his anti-Soviet views, an “extreme reactionary” for calling for world peace through world government, and a “faithful servant” of the American imperialists for fearing a nuclear holocaust. In the CCP’s attacks on idealist philosophy, Russell was lumped together with Hu Shi, John Dewey and the proponents of logical analysis as servants of capitalist imperialism.³⁹⁰ When Liang Shuming, who decades earlier became a pioneer of rural communism in China independently of Mao

387 Bertrand Russell, “China & History,” *The Saturday Review*, August 4, 1951. He also wrote “For my part, I loved the Chinese when I lived among them, and I cannot bring my self to believe that all these wonderful qualities that they derive from a tradition of civilization ... will disappear forever in obedience to the brutal doctrines of Moscow.” Russell correctly considered Mao was a potential ‘Titoist’, although he was incorrect in assuming this meant he would be more friendly to the West as a result. See Letter from Bertrand Russell to Katherain Tait, September 29, 1950.

388 Russell, *Unarmed Victory*, 67-68.

389 Letter from Bertrand Russell to Gilbert Murray, February 18, 1954. For the classic study on the extensive use of brain washing by the CCP, see Robert J. Lifton, *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism: A Study of “Brainwashing” in China* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1961). The academic world’s compliance with government-approved thought is achieved in the PRC today with a mandatory smart phone app through which reading progress is monitored and evaluated.

390 See the following articles in *Renmin Ribao* 《人民日报》：“出席巴黎——布拉格世界拥护和平大会中国代表团报告书”，1949年6月4日。“在第二届世界保卫和平大会上一苏联代表爱伦堡的演说”，1950年11月23日。“社会主义思想体系的伟大力量”，1952年03月18日。“苏联报刊论文摘要”，1952年8月11日。“两点批判，一点反省”，1955年1月19日。“批判胡风哲学思想上的主观唯心论”，1955年3月3日。

Zedong, had a falling out with Mao, the sustained attacks on Liang in the pages of *Renmin Ribao* also included of attacks on Russell that were more focused than previously—or at any rate on Liang’s Confucian version of Russell.³⁹¹ Such condemnations reflected the more general struggle by the CCP to redefine the legacy of May Fourth in the 1950s, in the course of which Bertrand Russell was oddly recast as an “imperialist warmonger” and a “spy” sent to China by the West in 1920 to damage the movement.³⁹² The name calling abated in the second half of the 1950s, but the PRC again showed its wariness of Russell in 1958 when it withdrew from the Pugwash Conference on nuclear disarmament, a yearly conference co-founded by Russell for which he personally sought the PRC’s participation because he opposed Beijing’s isolation—especially on such an important issue of international concern. Their withdrawal was in direct response to the “reactionary politics” Russell manifested in his criticism of the Soviet invasion of Hungary.³⁹³

The tide appears to have finally turned for Russell’s reputation in the PRC with the Sino-Indian border dispute of 1962, during which he exchanged a large number of letters with Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai and Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. Russell’s complete account is given in his short book *Unarmed Victory* (1963) and is notable for his willingness to engage the Chinese viewpoint and promote de-escalation on both sides despite his initial condemnation of Chinese aggression. Zhou wrote Russell to

391 For background on Liang’s falling out with Mao see Alitto, *The Last Confucian*, 324-333. Also see the following articles in *Renmin Ribao* 《人民日报》: 千家驹: “批判梁漱溟坚持中国落后反对工业化的谬论”, 1955年8月10日. 孙定国: “批判梁漱溟的反动的世界观”, 1955年9月11日. 汤用彤, 任继愈: “批判梁漱溟的生命主义哲学”, 1955年9月22日. 金岳霖: “略评康福斯的两本哲学著作”, 1956年2月3日.

392 Chow, *The May Fourth Movement*, 355-358.

393 Gordon Barrett, “China’s ‘People’s Diplomacy’ and the Pugwash Conferences, 1957-1964,” *Journal of Cold War Studies* 20, no. 1 (Winter 2018): 140-169.

encourage him to continue to use his “distinguished influence to promote a peaceful settlement of the Sino-Indian boundary question.”³⁹⁴

By this point, Bertrand Russell’s all-consuming obsession was the avoidance of nuclear war, before which, he said, questions about which side was “right” paled in significance. He saw in the Sino-Indian conflict a tripwire for a global war just as threatening as the simultaneous Cuban Missile Crisis, during which he also corresponded with Nikita Khrushchev and John F. Kennedy and which comprises the other half of *Unarmed Victory*. Russell took the minority view in the West that China’s pursuit of nuclear weapons was justified for its own security in light of Eisenhower’s nuclear-centered “New Look” policy applied to the Taiwan Strait Crises of 1954 and 1958. He was also on the vanguard in thinking China’s possession of nuclear weapons could assist in what would later be called “nuclear peace.” He thought China’s international isolation in favor of Chiang Kai-shek’s regime on Taiwan was a farce, a belief he directly told Zhou Enlai, and publicly called for the immediate return of Hong Kong. His later condemnation of the United States’ bombing of North Vietnam in 1965 and subsequent establishment of unofficial, but high-profile “Vietnam War Crimes Trials” (aka, the “Russell Tribunal”) capped his complete rehabilitation in the pages of *Renmin Ribao*. From 1962 to 1966 he received yearly Christmas cards from the PRC’s embassy in London. He also maintained an occasional two-way correspondence with Zhou Enlai throughout this period.

The Cultural Revolution put an end to Russell’s contact with China. The previously regular reports on Bertrand Russell’s activities in *Renmin Ribao* ceased entirely in April 1967, his name next being mentioned in July 1971, by which point he

394 Letter from Zhou Enlai to Bertrand Russell, November 16, 1962.

had long since passed away. No more Christmas cards came in the mail. Russell inquired with Zhou Enlai in March 1967 about concerning reports of the arrest of Liu Shaoqi and other officials, quixotically reasoning with Zhou that “where there is only one side heard in a dialogue, it is unlikely that enlightenment or true progress can prevail.” He sent other letters to Zhou pleading for the release of British citizens arbitrarily detained by the CCP.³⁹⁵ Russell’s “influence” was not welcomed by Zhou on these matters and all his letters went unanswered. His last letter to Zhou Enlai, sent nine days before he died on February 2, 1970 at 97 years old, shows Bertrand Russell’s unwillingness to mentally break with China for a second time.

* * * * *

What are we to make of Bertrand Russell and China in the 1920s? Despite the disagreement of this thesis with Suzanne Ogden’s general characterization of Russell’s own motivation and behavior in China, she is not alone in concluding that “Russell’s visit, measured by its impact on Chinese social reconstruction, might almost not have happened at all.” Benjamin Schwartz also judges that “Russell’s influence was to prove restricted and evanescent,” while John Fairbank dismissed John Dewey’s impact on China as “superficial” without mentioning Russell, indicating he considered his to be less.³⁹⁶ But in fact, many mentions of Russell and China in general histories are simply that—passing mentions of the fact that he visited China, usually in the same breath with Dewey, and brought up because it is an interesting and unusual footnote to the main story. In these majority of instances, the implied understanding is that Russell’s visit was

395 Letter from Bertrand Russell to Zhou Enlai, March 1, 1967. Other letters were sent to Zhou on January 7, 1967, May 10, 1968 and October 4, 1968, and January 24, 1970.

396 Ogden, “Sage in the Inkpot.” Benjamin I. Schwartz, *Chinese Communism and the Rise of Mao* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), 19. Fairbank, *The Great Chinese Revolution*, 201.

important to a group of people at a certain time, but not far beyond that.³⁹⁷ When forced to choose, the general consensus pushes one to conclude that Russell's impact on China was minor. Working under the assumption that Russell set out to change China, in view of the fact that his visit did not "succeed" in fundamentally changing it, Ogden sets out with the intention of writing an in-depth analysis of why it "failed."

However, this binary view is not appropriate. The main cast of characters of the May Fourth Movement were Chinese. In this drama, Bertrand Russell entered as an important supporting character to perform his role in keeping the plot moving along. Russell had no interest, either during or after his visit as we saw in Chapters 3 and 4, of directly guiding China's development, despite the requests of many of his interlocutors. As Russell's own experience in China demonstrates, the significance of even Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin may have been more due to a widespread misreading of their thought and its applicability to China—the actual influence of their ideas (as understood in Russell's literal reading) may have been weaker than their ideas as filtered through their Chinese interpreters, such as Li Dazhao, Chen Duxiu and study groups such as Mao Zedong's. It is worth recalling that the growing interest in Communism inside China only predated the rapid growth of interest in Russell's works by a few months, and the short *Communist Manifesto* was first translated into Chinese just months before Russell arrived. These two thought trends then grew simultaneously, culminating in *Xin Qingnian's* decision to openly support Communism in the September 1920 issue, the month before their special issue dedicated to Russell's works in honor of his arrival. In

397 To give one example of the single-mention pattern: "The visits to China of men like John Dewey and Bertrand Russell, during and after the [May Fourth Movement], and their introduction of pragmatism and other Western ideas also provided some of the main ideologies for the second phase of the [New Culture Movement]." See Joseph T. Chen, "The May Fourth Movement Redefined," *Modern Asian Studies* 4, no. 1 (1970): 63-81.

such a rapidly evolving period one could even question the ultimate direct impact of Soviet Russia; after all, the hard-working Soviet adviser Mikhail Borodin, who arrived in 1924 to spend three years in China in direct, daily contact with the leadership of the GMD, ultimately only succeeded in earning his chapter in Spence's *To Change China*.

Instead, another way to view Russell in China is that his role cannot be excised from the story without leaving a lacuna in the explanation of certain important trends of the time. For example, Schwartz does recognize that, from "the heated controversies with followers of Bertrand Russell, anarchists, 'social democrats', nationalists, and others," during the 1920-21 debate on socialism, "there finally emerged the hard nucleus of the future Communist Party."³⁹⁸ Lee Feigon, in his biography of Chen Duxiu, also sees Russell's "inadvertent influence" in spreading the Marxist message in China as a result of the Changsha controversy.³⁹⁹ Russell's impact could also be clearly felt on both sides of the anti-Christian movement of the early 1920s, out of which a public sentiment towards the religion hardened that Chiang Kai-shek's own formal conversion to Christianity in 1930 and later support for it did little to overturn. Russell and Dora Black's relationship and personal examples also did much to help sweep away many of the social taboos of previous generations, and one could ponder what from that filtered into the more cosmopolitan Nanjing Decade. In the end, Nathaniel Peffer's previously quoted assessment is apt: All those changes in China to which Russell can be linked were already "in the spirit of the times." The intellectual integrity, sympathy and frankness of Russell, who, as a European not cut from the imperial, business or missionary cloth was as exotic

398 Schwartz, *Chinese Communism and the Rise of Mao*, 33, 28-36 *passim*.

399 Feigon, *Chen Duxiu*, 163.

to the Chinese as the Chinese were to Western visitors, lent “authority to what had been only hesitant skepticism and tentative revolt,” and so helped move things along.⁴⁰⁰

However, there are other ways in which to evaluate Russell and China without defaulting to his direct impact on China. One perspective that has been a main focus of this thesis in Chapter 4 is Russell’s activity on behalf of China after he returned to Britain. In 1924, the American poet Witter Bynner observed that “some of the ablest books on China have been so fundamentally prejudiced against Chinese culture that they were like able Mohammedan versions of Christ.” He particularly mentioned guidebooks, commercial compilations and the popular history by J.O.P. Bland and Edmund Backhouse that delighted a less-informed Russell in 1911 and was still very popular in the 1920s. “Fortunately,” Bynner continued, “some of the later observers of China have approached an old civilization with less constraint: scientists like Bertrand Russell, free from racial bias; philosophers like John Dewey, free from religious bias; publicists like Gilbert Reid and Nathaniel Peffer, free from imperialistic bias.”⁴⁰¹

It is useful to briefly revisit the depths to which this prejudice openly sank in order to better contrast how novel Russell’s writings were and appreciate the polarizing effect they had in Britain. This is evident in the book *What’s Wrong with China* (1926), written by Rodney Gilbert with a title that must have had some intention of mirroring *The Problem of China*, also reprinted in 1926. Indeed, Gilbert’s book reads as a “Bizarro World” version of Russell’s. Rodney Gilbert was the high-profile Anglophile American editor of the British *North China Daily News*, the paper that also published the weekly *North China Herald*. Along with the British H. G. W. Woodhead and J.O.P. Bland, he

400 Nathaniel Peffer, “The Uniqueness of Missionaries,” *Asia* 24, no. 5, May 1924.

401 Witter Bynner, “Citizens of Heaven,” *Forum* 71, 1924. Notable is that Russell is the sole Briton on this list, the remaining being American.

represents the non-missionary Old China Hand whose writings were eagerly read and amplified back to England by the treaty port communities.⁴⁰² Gilbert's book is an eye-opening relic of another time and can be understood as a thrashing out in anger by his group at the shifting Anglo-Chinese relationship. According to Gilbert, China is a misfit in the modern world that has become "spoiled and capricious beyond words, simply because she has been consistently overpraised and overrated when she should have been spanked." Recently many were blaming the West for the problems of China, but "if China's ills are to be laid at our door, as her propagandists say, it is because we have failed to realize that we are dealing with children, because we have treated the individual Chinese as an adult and the nation as a grown-up." Even the Chinese language is used to illustrate what is "wrong" with the Chinese mind; to say the simple English sentence "next Saturday, if the weather is fine, I expect to go by the morning train to Peking, spend Sunday there, and return on Monday afternoon," a Chinese person would say "under prayer six, heaven-breath if good-ed, I strike-reckon sit above half day's fire-cart, upon Peking go, at that-in pass Prayer, Prayer-one, under half day, back come."⁴⁰³

By 1926, Gilbert's attitude was acceptable to a shrinking minority of domestic British public opinion. Indeed, frustration with this fact is what helped inspire its writing as a last-gasp plea. Phoebe Chow observes that by 1926, "pro-Chinese voices gradually dominated the press at home, leaving less room for those who advocated a firmer policy against the Chinese." For J.O.P. Bland, a name strongly associated with the British China expert and someone in close sympathy with Gilbert, the realization that his views were

402 Bickers, *Changing British Attitudes*, 31-46. Chow, *Britain's Imperial Retreat from China*, 181-182.

403 Rodney Gilbert, *What's Wrong with China* (London: John Murray, 1926), 7, 47-48, 91. The normal sounding Chinese sentence he was translating literally is probably: 下礼拜六, 天气如好了, 我打算坐上午的火车, 往北京去, 在那里过礼拜, 礼拜一下午回来.

increasingly unpopular with the British Press and Foreign Office was extremely upsetting. He complained to a friend in January 1926, writing “am I, who have studied it all my life, debarred from giving, over my own name, facts and arguments to prove that our present educational policy is unsound, detrimental alike to Chinese and to British interests? Is there really ‘no good in arguing about these things’?” Later in June 1927, he complained of the difficulty he had publishing his views in the London newspapers, writing of the *Times* that it was now “practically American in sentiment ... and its foreign Editor is a flabby invertebrate whose sympathy for Young China’s ‘patriotic aspirations’ is the fruit of complete ignorance.”⁴⁰⁴ Bland wrote one of the rare scathing reviews of *The Problem of China*—Gilbert’s *North China Herald* contained another.⁴⁰⁵ However, the tide had turned in British public opinion about China, and rather than automatically go to books like H. G. W. Woodhead’s *The Truth about the Chinese Republic* (1925) for information about modern China, many were instead opting for writers like the *Manchester Guardian*’s Arthur Ransome, whose book *The Chinese Puzzle* (1927) contained a Russellesque discussion on the “Shanghai mind.”⁴⁰⁶

Again the question is, what impact did Russell have on tempering Britain’s China policy through the shaping of public opinion, and thereby indirectly on China? Some schools of international relations theory deny such elements factor at all, and would point to the fast-rising power of the GMD relative to a weakened postwar Britain struggling to

404 Chow, *Britain’s Imperial Retreat from China*, 180, 231.

405 Reproduced in “Russell Book about Chinese Arouses Bland,” *Japan Times & Mail*, February 14, 1923. Originally published in December 1922. Russell replied in January 1923 and Black replied to Russell in February 1923, all in the *New Generation*. See also the previously discussed “The Brigands: Bertrand Russell’s Tribute to the Foreigner in China” in *North China Herald*.

406 H. G. W. Woodhead, *The Truth About the Chinese Republic* (London: Hurst & Blackett, Ltd., 1925). Arthur Ransome, *The Chinese Puzzle* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1927).

maintain peace in Europe as sufficient for explaining Britain's "imperial retreat" from the weakest link in their chain of Empire.⁴⁰⁷ One could further argue that, had Chiang not turned on the CCP and instead attempted to take Shanghai, the 20,000 British soldiers newly stationed there would have resisted with force. Continuing this line of "realist" thinking, one might even say that the reason Chiang didn't attempt to take Shanghai was because of this fact, and his calculation that a military conflict with Britain would not have been to the advantage of his own regime. The two shifting powers simply reached a new equilibrium without crossing into war. It is well beyond the scope of this thesis to comment on this longstanding debate. It was appreciated at the time that the media had a major role in forming public opinion within democratic societies, as seen in the American journalist Walter Lippmann's seminal *Public Opinion* (1922). It has been argued here that, to the extent that public opinion can be said to act as a restraint on international behavior, Bertrand Russell's extensive writings on China between 1921 and 1927, particularly his now classic book *The Problem of China*, was a major factor in encouraging and shaping the new tide of British public opinion in China's favor.

Returning to domestic China, perhaps a more appropriate question than how Russell impacted China is what we can learn about the May Fourth period from Russell's visit. For example, how does Russell's impression of Peking University's students as having "not much brains" square with the portrait of the *Beida* students as noble May Fourth revolutionaries leading China into the modern era? What was it that drove Bertrand Russell to the mental state where he would actually declare in a private letter

407 For example see the 'structural realist' Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979). Also see the 'offensive neorealist' John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2001). For a survey on the 'liberal' case for public opinion, see Ole Holsti, "Public Opinion and Foreign Policy: Challenges to the Almond-Lippmann Consensus," *International Studies Quarterly* 36, no. 4 (1992): 439-466.

that “50 years of foreign domination is the only hope” for China—an opinion that lasted no longer than his plan to learn the Chinese language? After all, Bertrand Russell cannot be dismissed as easily as Rodney Gilbert.

First, it must be said that much of Russell’s initially negative sentiment towards his Chinese interlocutors in his first three months can be partly ascribed to “culture shock” and his unfulfilled expectations. His letters prior to 1920 show that his image of China was highly influenced by the “Orientalism” of his Bloomsbury social group, and Russell later recalled how his mood after visiting Russia drove him to “plunge with relief into traditional China.”⁴⁰⁸ He was aware of the student movement, but seems to have been taken completely by surprise at the magnitude of what he was stepping into. In terms of biography, after a 22-year-old Ludwig Wittgenstein, one of the great geniuses of the 20th century, showed up unannounced at Russell’s office in 1911 and proceeded in the coming years to work out what became the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* before his eyes while criticizing Russell’s own work, Bertrand Russell became convinced that his own future contributions to philosophy were over. In what would become the book *Analysis of Mind* (1921), Russell believed he had once again hit upon something significant and traveled to the new backdrop of China expecting to make this the centerpiece of his time there. The utter lack of interest he encountered among the students and others in the lecture hall and in his reading group must have been deeply disappointing. But as noted in Chapter 3, by early 1921 Russell underwent a major change of attitude. In his preface to *Analysis of Mind* written in Beijing in January 1921, he included the warning: “There are a few allusions to China in this book, all of which were written before I had been in China.... I have used ‘China’ merely as a synonym for ‘a distant country’, when I wanted

408 Letter from Bertrand Russell to Gerald Brenan, May 25, 1936.

illustrations of unfamiliar things.” It isn’t clear what references Russell had in mind; his caution may reflect the profound change that his own view of China had undergone in the previous three months, and a fear that anything he said in reference to it before would now smack of superficiality. In regard to his understanding of China, the Bertrand Russell of 1921-27, though still a deep admirer of its traditional culture and sad at the prospect of its disappearance, seems eons removed from the pre-1920 Russell of his private letters.

But Russell’s frustrations were not just a product of his own mind. Hu Shi’s frustration with “problems versus ‘isms’” is very well known. Russell’s frustration with what he considered the unthinking Bolshevik obsession of many Chinese he encountered is directly connected to this debate. He also showed signs of frustration with the firm opposition to his positive view of traditional China by those who nevertheless continued to seek out his opinion on China. We also have the articles of Chen Duxiu, Yang Duanliu and Han Wei discussed in Chapter 3 to highlight the frustration felt by many Chinese with aspects of Russell’s visit outside of the “problems versus ‘isms’” debate. Han Wei expressed his frustration with the capitalists who co-opted Russell’s call for industrialization in their criticism of socialism. Yang Duanliu wrote specifically to urge people to stop pulling Russell in every which direction, among whom he would have included the Hunan warlord Tan Yankai, a person entirely unconnected with Russell’s visit who created a week-long conference for the sole purpose of personally hosting him as its main speaker. Yang even implicitly criticized Russell’s own host Fu Tong, who we recall commented pre-arrival on the “many advantages,” of Russell’s visit, “not least of which is a chance to conduct ‘people diplomacy’ (国民外交).” Yang replied that “foreign scholars should come to China to talk about their specialties ... not to engage in so-called

‘people diplomacy’.” Chen Duxiu made similar criticisms, and mocked the advertisements at Russell’s welcome banquet for The Commercial Press, the publisher that Russell later wrote to Fu to complain about for their unauthorized use of his works.⁴⁰⁹ The disagreements of the May Fourth period weren’t simply between the “problems” and “isms” factions of the New Culture movement, or with the last remaining proponents of the traditional *guocui* movement, but with other modernizers too who had different visions for China’s future.

Capturing these same themes, Figure 1 shows a rarely if ever reproduced example of an advertisement from *Minguo Ribao*, this one for Nanyang Brothers cigarettes, that makes unauthorized use of Russell’s identity for what was probably viewed as a capitalist cause. By serving as a “Second Confucius” to some and the ideal “Marlboro Man” to others, the story of Bertrand Russell in China allows us to see the complexity of Chinese society during the May Fourth period in the variety of responses he elicited. With the possible exception of John Dewey, who does not seem to have generated the same extreme level of passion and enthusiasm among his followers in China as Russell’s first months there, only a visitor like Bertrand Russell would have been able to reflect this unique view to posterity.

409 Fu Tong quoted from Zheng Shiqu, “Wusi qianhou waiguo mingzhe laihua jiangxue yu zhongguo sixiang jie de biandong.” Yang Duanliu, “Huanying Luosu zhi xinshi.” Chen Duxiu, “San lun Shanghai shehui.” Han Wei, “Luosu de buxing.” Letter from Russell to Fu, December 1920 (date uncertain).

羅素之名言

世界大哲學家

羅素先生近在江蘇
教育會演講其言有
『無論何國必須經過經
業之時期空言終無一
使一凡業不發達則國
受痛苦將莫能喻』



南洋兄弟煙草公司為中國實業
之淵源諸君服膺羅氏之言當
念南洋公司之大愛國香煙
於我國實業前途有
若何關係？



Figure 1: An advertisement for Nanyang Brothers Tobacco Company in *Minguo Ribao*, November 3, 1920. The ad ran daily in *Minguo Ribao* between October 27 and November 6. It also appeared in *Shenbao* on October 27. Russell was not consulted about using his name or image. The top says “Russell’s famous words.” The right block of text says: “World-renowned philosopher Mr. Russell, in a recent lecture delivered to the Jiangsu Province Educational Association, said ‘All countries must pass through a period of industrial development. In the end empty talk won’t develop industry. It will only bring unimaginable suffering.’” The left block of text says: “Nanyang Brothers Tobacco Company stands at the origin of Chinese industry. All who are convinced by Russell’s words should consider what connection Nanyang Company’s Great Patriotic Cigarettes has to the industrial future of our country.” (Source: *Quan guo baokan suoyin* [National Index to Chinese Newspapers & Periodicals] <https://www.cnbsky.com/>)

Bertrand Russell's visit also has some ability to help augment our understanding of China today by connecting certain current trends to its May Fourth experience. In keeping with the Nanyang Brothers example, Figure 2 shows an advertisement ubiquitous across China in recent years for DeRucci bedroom furniture. One's immediate assumption looking at this ad for the first time is that this fine Italian product is the craftsmanship of the overly serious Italian designer looking straight at us, whose last name is probably DeRucci. One then might wonder why they never heard of DeRucci. Is his Italian company misrepresenting itself to make it "big in China"? An online search quickly reveals the company to be entirely Chinese and the anonymous man to be, it seems, a model—another Marlboro Man. The association of the West with legitimacy and the use of the West, in this case Italy, for marketing purposes is a recurring feature of contemporary Chinese society that hearkens back to the May Fourth movement's elevation of foreign ideas. Only in this case the Western figure is an empty shell—but that is not much different from how some perceived Bertrand Russell's visit to China, as represented by Figure 1.⁴¹⁰

410 China is not the only place where cultural appropriation happens. Superdry in the UK and Roku in the USA have appropriated Japanese culture for marketing purposes.



Figure 2: Advertisement for DeRucci in Xi'an Xianyang International Airport. (Photo by author, 2019) Fine Italian, scientific sleep technology from a Chinese company. The “Marlboro Man” of DeRucci in this advertisement, commonly seen throughout China, seems not to be involved with the company in any other way. Many groups in the China of 1920-21, such as Nanyang Brothers, The Commercial Press, and likely the Hunan warlord Tan Yankai, viewed Russell as serving a function in China no more substantial (which is not to say unimportant) than the anonymous man in this advertisement.

In a similar pattern, but with far more substance, Figure 3 shows three books available in China written by Michael Sandel, a moral philosopher and professor at Harvard University whose fame skyrocketed among the young in China a decade ago in a manner reminiscent of Russell in 1919-20. In the forward to a book of collected articles evaluating Sandel's encounter with China, journalist Evan Osnos recalls the "philosophical and spiritual revival" he witnessed in China between 2005 and 2013, especially among the young.⁴¹¹ This theme of emptiness in the midst of great change, and yearning for something more meaningful in life among a segment of the young in today's economy-driven China is a commonly occurring theme, for example in the books of Peter Hessler, Leslie Chang, and Evan Osnos, the movies of director Jia Zhangke and in aspects of documentaries like *Up the Yangtze* and *Last Train Home*. It is not a direct parallel to the May Fourth movement, but the deep need felt among young Chinese for a clear direction so that China's vigorous activity does not risk crashing the ship against the rocks—as Chen Duxiu put it in 1920—does have parallels to today. In Young China's devouring of books with titles like *Justice* (2010) and *What Money Can't Buy* (2012), one is reminded of Russell's own observation of his Chinese audience that, "when one begins to speak, their eyes have the look of starving men beginning a feast." Yet we recall how many of those same audience members turned on Russell when they interpreted him as promoting capitalism for China over socialism. Michael Sandel knows what line he is not allowed to cross, but one shudders to think how the "Weibo approved" element of Young China would respond should he choose to do so.

411 Michael J. Sandel and Paul J. D'Ambrosio, eds., *Encountering China: Michael Sandel and Chinese Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), viii.

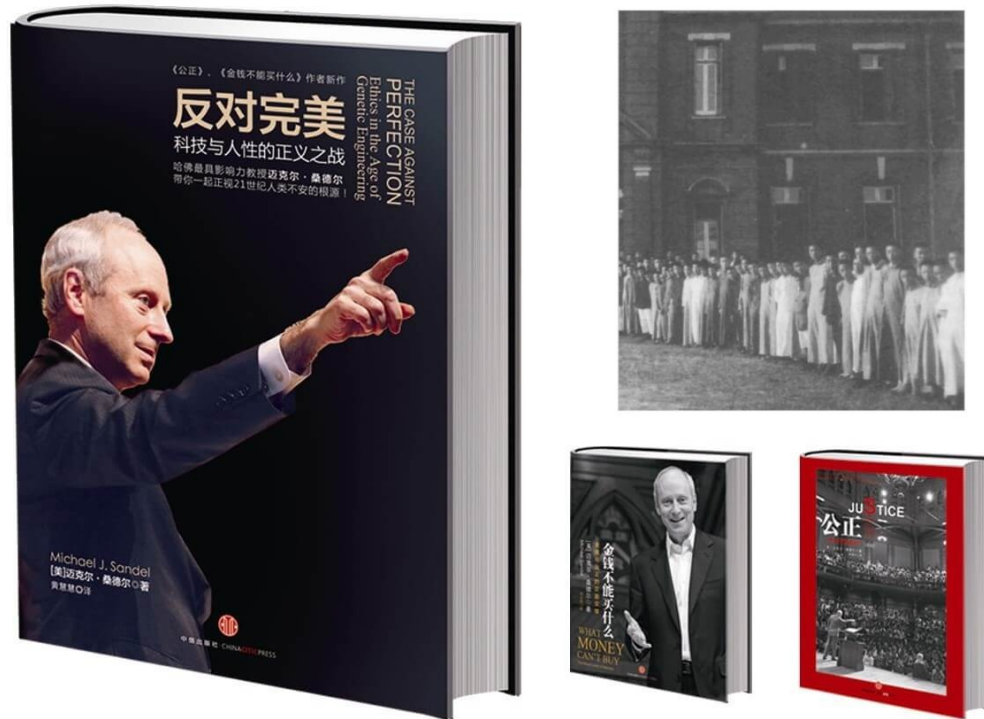


Figure 3: Encounters between China and Michael Sandel, Professor of Government at Harvard University. Upper-right: Students line up for Bertrand Russell’s lecture. Like Russell, Michael Sandel’s books on social philosophy have found a large and intense readership among the young in China. In contrast to Russell’s more politically focused books, Sandel’s books center on more abstract moral questions. Like Russell he has spoken to huge audiences in China. What lasting impact will Michael Sandel have on China through his engagement with the Young China of the early 21st century? (Sources: CITIC Press Group and *Beijing Ribao*, March 10, 2020.)



Figure 4: The future sells, Western speakers wanted. (Source: YouTube) A paying audience hears yet another visionary, 20 minute talk on AI at one of the many flashy pop-up tech conferences in China. In Russell’s first two weeks in China, he was roped into speaking at many events similarly created by enterprising organizations to satisfy huge public demand.

The inverse image of Sandel’s packed audiences is shown in Figure 4, where we see a packed audience to an ad-hoc conference on Artificial Intelligence (AI). Where the young of May Fourth focused on political and social issues, many educated young in China today focus on technology and AI, an acronym that has taken on a somewhat mystical association with The Future, and therefore with China. In such seemingly high budget surroundings one feels part of the vanguard—for the organizers collecting the registration fees the speaker is often an afterthought, even of dubious credentials for the role they are unexpectedly cast into playing on stage, but ideally from the West. That was the case for the person in the video. It was also the case for one person that this author encountered—a serious scientist not working in AI—who, being in China by chance for another meeting, did not understand what she had spontaneously agreed to. (It was not the event shown in Figure 4, but the picture she painted was the same.) “It was just really weird” were the best words she could find when trying to describe the experience many months later. A desire to hear The Expert give answers about The Future, and the exploitation of that desire, is also reflected in Russell’s visit. From the spontaneous conference in Changsha, to the desire by the *Beida* students to “get the question settled” on religion, to the urge of many organizations to associate Russell’s identity with their own groups, today it occasionally appears similarly difficult “not to be surprised by the general belief that a sage must be able to” point the way forward through their own “inspiration,” to borrow Russell’s words.

Finally, Bertrand Russell’s visit is important because the matters he wrote about afterwards still resonate deeply in China as if part of living memory. And Russell’s particular point of view and his passionate, eloquent, yet remarkably simple writing style—having no literary pretensions he still won the 1950 Nobel Prize for Literature—has

caused his communication of China to the West to stand out as much with his Chinese readers as his readers in the West. One observation has been the fairness of his view of China's aspirations. In 1927, Cai Yuanpei wrote for an English speaking audience to praise the efforts of people like Russell, saying that he had "written frequently and authoritatively on Chinese affairs with critical insight, high moral courage, a close acquaintance with educated Chinese and, above all, in a disinterested spirit, thus enlightening considerably the understanding of the Western public as to the real situation in China and as to the legitimate aspirations of the Chinese people."⁴¹² Another observation has been the paucity of similar writers in the West. In 1936, Lin Yutang in his *My Country and My People*, written in English to explain China to the West, underlined this by writing that Russell was "able to see the meaning in a type of life so different from one's own, but for one Sir Robert Hart there are ten thousand Rodney Gilberts, and for one Bertrand Russell there are ten thousand H. G. W. Woodheads."⁴¹³ For the Republic of China, Bertrand Russells have been few and far between.

412 See Cai Yuanpei's forward in Liang-li T'ang, *China in Revolt: How a Civilization Became a Nation* (London: Noel Douglas, 1927).

413 Lin Yutang, *My Country and My People* (London: William Heinemann Ltd, 1936), 10-11.



Figure 5: *Red Star Over China* (1937) by Edgar Snow and *The Problem of China* by Bertrand Russell. Both recently had high-profile reprintings, in June 2016 and September 2019, respectively. *Red Star Over China* was pervasive on bestseller tables in bookstores across China, and one imagines the same is true for Russell’s book. The former, and almost certainly the latter too, are widely encouraged reading material in the PRC today, using Xinhua Bookstore (新华书店) as the barometer. (Source: amazon.cn and jd.com)

In the People’s Republic of China this phenomenon has also been perceived, and increasing recognition has been given to past writers from the West who saw China in a positive light. When written about today in the PRC, Bertrand Russell is generally referred to as a “friend of the Chinese people (中国人民的朋友).” Edgar Snow, whose *Red Star Over China* (1937) introduced Mao’s iteration of the CCP to the West in a sympathetic portrayal, is another. They have been recognized in the past few years with high-profile reissues of their respective classic books on China (see Figure 5). Both are considered worthy of study for how some Westerners once viewed China in the past.

A new preface accompanies Russell’s re-translated book written by Tong Shijun, the Party Secretary at East China Normal University, and therefore in charge of

overseeing political compliance at the university for the CCP.⁴¹⁴ In it, Tong repeats Russell's concern for China, questioning if, in the course of developing its industrial strength, "will the Chinese people also travel down the road of imperialism?" Tong acknowledges that Russell feared the answer would be yes, and so readers of *The Problem of China* are confronted with this "Problem of Russell." Has China avoided this pitfall? In Tong's view, Mao Zedong gave the answer when he said in 1949 that, "as we develop our own culture and well-being, we will advance world peace and freedom." Over 65 years later in 2016, Xi Jinping reiterated Mao's sentiments when he said that China seeks to work with the world "to build peace and a brighter future." Tong concludes that "we have expended great effort and made a great contribution towards international peace and prosperity." Therefore China has escaped the "Russell Trap" of having expanding, aggressive ambitions accompany its growing power; using Russell's expression, China has tamed its "possessive impulse."

Tong closes his short essay by asking, "how can we find more sympathetic and understanding people like Russell to communicate with in the West?" If it were to turn out that this type of interlocutor no longer exists, then Tong calls on China to consider how, through its own effort, China can root its own viewpoint more firmly in the world and "increase the transmission of our own benevolence (善意)" more broadly on the international stage. For Tong, it seems, if those in the West today prefer not to interpret China the way Bertrand Russell did in the 1920s, if they do not want to accept China's benevolence, then the new problem for China is how best to set about constructing a world order that will.

414 Tong Shijun 童世骏: "Luosude 'Zhongguo wenti' yu Zhongguo de 'Luosu wenti' 罗素的 '中国问题' 与中国的 '罗素问题' ", *Beijing Ribao* 《北京日报》2019年9月2日. This is a reproduction of his preface. (Tong took his mandatory age-related retirement in December 2019.)

In 1927, Russell wrote:

Hitherto we have treated China with the injustice and brutality which invariably fall to the lot of the weak among nations; but the indignation aroused is at length putting an end to weakness, and enabling China to insist upon being treated as an equal. The sooner this is realised, the less disastrous it will be for ourselves.⁴¹⁵

The Tong Shijuns of the world would have us realize this by all becoming his version of Bertrand Russell, but the China and the West that Russell wrote about between 1921 and 1927 were, needless to say, very different from what they are today. It is natural for Tong Shijun to hope to find his Bertrand Russell for the present era of US-China rivalry.

Whether Russell would feel the same way is far from clear. What would Russell say of the benevolence of a country whose leaders and their supporters see the outside world as “gum stuck to the bottom of China’s shoe” when it refuses to comply?—a sentiment worthy of Rodney Gilbert.⁴¹⁶ What would he think of the *Global Times*, the CCP controlled English language newspaper that often sounds like the *North China Herald*? Speaking of Gilbert, Russell asked of this “foreign wolf in the Chinese sheepfold” what will happen “when the sheep learn their lesson?”⁴¹⁷ Tong Shijun recognizes this “Problem of Russell” and is quick to declare victory. But as his writings demonstrate through his criticisms of Britain, the United States, Soviet Russia and Japan, Bertrand Russell’s own judgment on this question would not yet be so final.

415 See Russell’s preface in Liang-li T’ang, *China in Revolt*. This was probably written earlier, but was published in 1927. Tang wrote to Russell on October 14, 1925 to request the preface.

416 Lily Kuo, “Australia Called ‘Gum Stuck to China’s Shoe’ by State Media in Coronavirus Investigation Stoush,” *Guardian*, April 28, 2020.

417 Bertrand Russell, “The Foreign Wolf in the Chinese Sheepfold: What Will Happen to Him When the Sheep Learn Their Lesson? Review of Gilbert, Rodney. *What’s Wrong with China?*” *Daily Herald*, April 7, 1926.

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