

China, cont'd

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We know that the past, because it has such congealed institutions and such congealed values, really will always imprison the future. And are we so deceived by the convolutions and by the vagaries of the historical process that we lose sight of the fact that it does move? But it does move. And the socialist revolution in China, which was the oldest and the most traditional society of the entire world, forces us to the point.

And it is the 4th of May of 1919, and it is turbulent in the city of Peking. And there are students that are swirling through the streets of that city, in China where Confucius is alive and well and living in Peking, and where the primary values are the values of filial piety and of reverence. And suddenly there is a great manifestation. And it is a spark, that 4th of May of 1919. And in that spark there is the seed of a revolution. And that revolution, after all, will grow, and it will spread, and it will burn and it will consume for thirty years — until finally, in 1949, a decision will be made and the revolution will come to its culmination in China.

And, consequently, in that 4th of May, 1919, we have an extraordinary starting point of this process. In the specifics of that event, there are students in Peking who are protesting against an imperialistic act. It is the act of the Treaty of Paris of 1919, turning over the German holdings in the German sphere of influence in Shantung to the Japanese. And these students say no: that Shantung is Chinese and it should go back to the Chinese government. And more specifically than that, there is a resentment over imperialism in general, and over all of those forces in China — the authorities in that sector of the ruling class which have made a capitulation to that imperialism. And, in the very largest, it is what Joseph Levenson once said about the 4th of May of 1919: "It is the day that Confucius died." Because, essentially, that day is a cultural revolution, the beginning of a mini cultural revolution which really is going to run its course.

And the word, then, is from Lu Hsün. And Lu Hsün, after all, becomes very much a spokesman of this movement, and it is that Lu Hsün who will become the greatest writer in contemporary China. It is that Lu Hsün who dies in 1936, but of whom Mao Tse-tung would nonetheless be able to say, some years ago, that he was the generalissimo of the Chinese Cultural Revolution. And the text that we have in hand of Lu Hsün is a quite magnificent one. And it is Lu Hsün saying that whenever you look at life and whenever you look at society, you cannot accept what you see on the surface, but you must begin to reflect, and you must begin to tear a veil away.

And so says Lu Hsün:

"All of my early days and later days, I have thought that somehow history was not what it was presented to me as being; that somehow, in the history of my country of China, that from the most ancient times, that the characteristic relationship is cannibalistic: that it is the devouring of the poor by the rich, it is the devouring of the weak by the strong. And I go to my history book," says Lu Hsün, "and I look there, and on page after page, I read such words as 'virtue,' and 'harmony,' and 'justice,' and I am disturbed. And I cannot sleep, and I am awake in the middle of the night. And suddenly I go back to my history book," says Lu Hsün, "and I look, and I see that between the lines, if you look carefully, are the words 'devour, devour.' And so," says Lu Hsün, "I belong to a history which counts 3,000 years of cannibalism — to a society where the strong have daily devoured the weak. How could I ever hope to meet a whole person, someone not deformed or stunted? But only the children are not as yet untarnished; only the children are not as yet untouched. Quick then, we must save the children, we must save the children!"

And what Lu Hsün is talking about is a *tabula rasa*: that you must, after all, raze to the ground all of those institutions and values which have deformed a society, and you must begin again.

And I tell you that it is, in many ways, that Lu Hsün who sustains me a great deal. You read the text of that magnificent contemporary writer and you are at the board of something very important. In a very concrete and very specific way, he gives me an answer to a question I have never quite properly been able to answer. For all of these years — for these twenty-five years that I have come to these rooms day after day and tried to make some kind of a synthesis as I see it, to try to make something of history as I see it, and to read somewhat, perhaps, between those lines that are much more characteristic of the books — for all those years you have said to me, and quite properly, "So what?" So maybe that is the truth after all. And maybe, fundamentally, it comes closer to a reality than I have been before. But then, so what? Can you change things, or do you give me the prescription for changing things? And I realize that it's hard to say that things are changing as we are saying that and as we are talking. And we must be alerted.

But it is Lu Hsün who gives me the answer, because in a very great story that he composes, he talks about three Chinese in a house. They are all sleeping and there is a fire in that house. And they are all sleeping and there is a fire in that house, and they are all to be consumed by that fire. There is no egress from that house. There are no windows out of which to climb. The doors cannot be reached. And only one of those three awakens. The others are, in a sense, overcome by that smoke. Only one awakens and sees what it is, and what the fate is. And the question is: Does he then awaken the other two Chinese to tell them what their fate is, that they are about to be

consumed by this fire? And there is no question — but of course he wakes them! Because that is the essence of it. As much as there is suffering, you must know it. And that is the essence of your being human because, when you know it, there is always that miracle of egress. And also it is human, after all, to know. And it is far better, after all, than to go off into a kind of escape or to go off into a kind of oblivion, all in a streak [*laughter, murmuring*].

And so we are at the board of something important in China. And we ask the question: What is it then that is responsible for the 4th of May of 1919? And what role does it play in the whole evolution of the Chinese Revolution?

And consider it first, if you please, horizontally and spatially. Consider that you are in 1919, and that there is an international crisis: a crisis, really, of capitalism, a crisis of imperialism which still has not fully run its course. Consider that 1919 is a spectacular year: that it opens up something, that it is an epidemic, that from country to country and people to people, there is the beginning of ripping open great chinks, great holes, in the walls of society. And you know why. It is the after effect of the First World War in which the capitalist powers have not only destroyed each other, but have so weakened themselves. It is the aftermath, if you please, of the Russian Revolution. And that Russian Revolution of 1917 has said that there is another strategy for development, another way of living. It is the year, in March of 1919, of the founding of the Communist International, which says that there is an international movement that will help people to throw off their oppressors. And everywhere there is that turbulence like an epidemic in 1919. And why no historian has come to treat it collectively, that starting point, is really quite mystifying. And you have it in Europe. And you have, really, attempts at revolution in Hungary and in Germany and in Austria and in Italy, and even in France.

But we're talking about the Third World. And for the Third World, 1919 is something. And the 4th of May of 1919 in China must be seen as a reflection of, as a contribution to, something that really is spatially global in that sense. It really is mind-blowing. Consider, after all, all of those movements of that year that claim independence, that claim that there shall be home rule, that claim that there shall be now national modes of development, and not colonial status.

You start off in January of 1919, with something that is so astonishing: something begins to happen in Japan. And Japan is an imperial, autocratic power — an authoritarian society where workers, after all, are supposed to take orders and obey them. And you have in 1919 in Japan the great rice riots, about which we really should know a lot more and on which Japanese historians should really enlighten us more. But we know that in the month of January 1919, there already was a reaction to terrible high costs of food, the high cost of rice, and to the fact that in the postwar there was unemployment and the cutting of wages. So that, in that first month of 1919,

in the most astonishing conditions, in a textile factory in Nagano in Japan, you get women workers — women workers, Japanese women who are supposed to be so subservient — and they come together in that plant, and they stand up and they sing a song together which talks about the tyranny of capitalism. And in the month of February of 1919 in Japan, on the 11th of February — when you are supposed to celebrate in a legendary fête, that kind of celebration of the legendary Emperor Jimmu — and on that day, instead of celebrating the tradition, the students in Tokyo march about the city carrying red flags. And then all of those strikes: the strikes of railroad workers and of postal workers and of workers in the arsenal and in the shipyards, getting very close to the military establishment of Japan. All of them demanding a lowering of the price of food, demanding better social conditions. Oh, you are at the board of something.

The 1st of March in Korea. That Korea, after all, which is a protectorate of Japan — which Japan has laid hands on officially in 1904, which has found the protectorate consecrated by the Treaty of Portsmouth after the Russo-Japanese War in 1905 — and that Korea, now really a colony of Japan. And the last Korean king [Emperor Gojong] dies at the end of February 1919. And on the 1st of March, in the city of Seoul, the Korean students manifest in march and they proclaim a boycott against Japanese goods.

All of which will be echoed in the May 4th movement in China, or that tremendous movement in India in 1919. All through the war, a home-rule movement in that country. And the British, coming to the morrow of the war, and repressing that movement, and making laws that are very, very harsh and discriminatory. And so Gandhi calls out a mass movement: non-violent and non-cooperation, a peaceful movement not to cooperate with the British, to close shops, to manifest in the streets with peaceful demonstrations. Gandhi calls it on the 6th of April of 1919. And you go only a few days until the 16th of April of that year, and you are in the city of Amritsar (which is in the Punjab), and in Amritsar the British army fires on a crowd of 20,000 Indians, kills a thousand of them, wounds about 1,200. And you know the result of Amritsar: that for the rest of 1919, it is hell to pay in India. The home-rule movement becomes more intense until the British government must offer the Government of India Act of 1919 with its bogus concessions, power still in the hand of the Governors-General and of the provincial governors, but a majority of elected Indians in the provincial assemblies. And once they get power, something will change.

Or you are in Turkey. And in Anatolia, you begin to mount a movement in 1919. It is Mustafa Kemal resenting, after all, the fact that the British and the French and the Italians and finally the Greeks want to eat away what is the national patrimony of Turkey. And Mustafa Kemal raises an army toward the saving of that integrity and toward the modernization of Turkey, a movement that will become a model in that part of the world.

And, for Christ's sake, you have it in Egypt. And that is so benighted, and that is so much a protectorate of the British. And there you are in 1919, and the fellah, the Egyptian peasant, comes into history for the first time in the modern experience. And the fellah, or the peasantry in Egypt, in 1919 begin to run over whole territories, and under the aegis of radical intellectuals begin to establish ephemeral republics and proclaiming the end of British rule. And in the cities of Egypt, a united front between the small working class and the bourgeoisie for national independence. It is the movement of Saad Zaghloul which really becomes the beginning point of the Egyptian independence movement.

You see the point. The point is that you have something concatenated. You have here a chain, you have an epidemic; that if imperialism is a system, that the reaction to it will be also. And yet one must zero in on the question. Because, in its specificity, the 4th of May of 1919 is Chinese. And its roots are struck in the deception and the tragedy and the failure of the Chinese Republic, established in January of 1912. You are dealing with those years between 1912 and 1919, which are years of terrible disappointment for those who had expected something else. And in those seven years, there are three facts, three factors that begin to operate and that really become the props of the 4th of May movement and the Chinese revolutionary movement that comes out of it. One, of course, is the decomposition of the Chinese Republic. Secondly is the reaffirmation of foreign imperialism. And third, the evolution and the emergence of new social forces in China, which social forces will play their role.

And when we talk about this decomposition of the Chinese Republic, you know what we are talking about: that the architects of that Republic in 1911, of that revolution, were modernist and nationalist army officers. But they were of the gentry class. And class told. And, consequently, they put the reigns of that revolution not into the hands of a radical intelligentsia — which was organized into the Tongmenghui, or the Brotherhood League — but they put the reins of that revolution into the hands of gentry and of bureaucrats who rallied to the revolution, who were willing to dispense with the Manchus to save themselves. And you know that the president of that Republic, ultimately, in March of 1912 was no longer Sun Yat-sen — who gave it up and couldn't hold the reins in his hand, but was up in Peking — it was Yüan Shih-k'ai. And Yüan Shih-k'ai, after all, was a Mandarin general, somebody who was head of the armed forces for the Manchu Empire, and consequently became the president of a Republic he hated. He established not a parliamentary republic — nothing by the Constitution of Nanking of 1912; he was unwilling to play that parliamentary game — established a dictatorship, and was well on the way to reestablishing a dynasty, to reestablishing the monarchy when he died in June of 1916.

And then you know that from the death of Yüan Shih-k'ai, there was nobody at Peking who could really make central government work. And so you get that terrible period that lasts ten

years of what we call warlordism in China, the *chün-shih*: those who are the military commanders in the various provinces of China, they establish these kind of pseudo-feudal dictatorships in these provinces. And the life of the Chinese deteriorates under that rule. And you know, finally, that there is an ambiguity, a wasting away, of the radical intelligentsia: those who had been in the Brotherhood League, those who had been in the Tongmenghui, those who had preached a revolution in China that should bring a modern republic, they dwindled off from 1912 on.

Or put it this way: that they divide. In the Brotherhood League, there was a division in 1912 between what we call the Canton group and the Shanghai group. The Canton group, that was the radical left wing of the Tongmenghui, of the Brotherhood League. And that radical left wing said, "Look, here in the south, in Kwantung, in China, we have mass support possible. So let us not cooperate with Peking. Let us not cooperate in that bogus parliamentary system. Let's make an armed struggle. Let's raise an army in the south, and let's really try to continue the revolution." And the other group, which included Sun Yat-sen, and was at Shanghai. And they're the moderates. And they represent much more of the bourgeoisie, and they say, "No. We will cooperate with Yüan Shih-k'ai, we will go into parliament, we will assume that the Constitution of 1912 will actually go into effect. And so we will change the Brotherhood League into a party, a party which can stand at parliamentary elections." And so in August of 1912, the moderates win out in the Brotherhood League, and they change that league into a nationalist party, the party we know as the Kuomintang. And that Kuomintang, after all, will then stand at the elections under that bogus Constitution of 1912.

And that all dwindles into nothing. And while that happens, imperialism deepens — oh, in a most extraordinary way. And you are dealing with the war years. And, you see, the war years change the situation in China. Because before the war, imperialism had been collective, or imperialism had been, if you please, cooperative. It had gone by the motto of Lord Salisbury, that China is "big enough for all of us." And, consequently, all of the imperialist powers had blocked out their sphere of influence. But then, you see, there is the war. And the British and the French are much too busy fighting in Europe, and Germany is also fighting and will be defeated, and Russia is also fighting and will have a revolution. And that leaves, for the war years, only the United States and Japan.

Now, the United States is interested. And between 1915 and 1920, the House of Morgan is really thyroid-like. And it begins to become glandular in China. And it wants to make loans to the Chinese government, and it wants to lay hands on infrastructure. But then, you see, the United States goes into that war also in April of 1917, and even before that is much too concerned about propping up her allies in Europe. And, consequently, the free hand really goes to Japan.

And Japan exercises that free hand in an extraordinary way. We are talking about the Twenty-One Demands of January 12th of 1915, imposed upon Yüan Shih-k'ai, which he must accept by the 25th of May of that year. Twenty-one demands — that's a lot of demands. And those Twenty-One Demands tell us what? In the first place, that Japan wants all of northern China totally in the Japanese pocket. We are talking about Manchuria, and Manchuria, after all, already is becoming a Japanese base as a result of the Russo-Japanese war of 1904 and '05. At the end of that war, in the Treaty of Portsmouth, the Japanese got the Liaotung Peninsula and Port Arthur from the Russians, got that leasehold, and also took over the South Manchurian Railway. Now they want the entire province to be considered a Japanese sphere of influence, with that Shantung where the Germans had had their position, and with that Inner Mongolia — in other words, to take the northern part of China and to make it, really, a satrapy of Japan.

But it is more than that. Listen to this in the Twenty-One Demands; it is a protectorate that we're talking about: "The Chinese government will use influential Japanese as advisors in political, financial, and military affairs. The police in specified cities will be directed by both Chinese and Japanese authorities. And should China ever need foreign loans, Japanese banks will always have the priority." In other words, that the administrative and the political and the financial whip upon China will be firmly into the Japanese hands.

And the Chinese government at Peking, Yüan Shih-k'ai, tried to resist that and couldn't. And the Japanese began to deploy troops in Manchuria and Shantung, and they sent warships to Foochow and to Amoy. And on the 25 of May of 1915, the Chinese government agreed to the Twenty-One Demands.

And all that the Japanese then needed was approval by the Americans, who were the other ones with a free hand (or a relatively free hand). And the Americans got into the war, and consequently made that agreement with the Japanese. Now, it was temporary, we know that. And we know that the Japanese became a great irritant to the Americans, and that Pearl Harbor plays into that whole interesting history. But it suffices to say that in 1917, on the 2nd of November, the Japanese negotiator in Washington, Viscount Ishii [Kikujirō], talks to the Secretary of State, who is Robert Lansing. And Ishii and Lansing exchange notes, which is called the Ishii-Lansing Agreement. And in those notes, we read, after all, the following: "The governments of the United States and Japan recognize that territorial propinquity creates special interest between countries. As a consequence, the government of the United States recognizes that Japan has special and vital interests in China, especially in those northern provinces closest to its possessions." Oh, and if you want a chapter for your informal history of hypocrisy: that the rest of those notes, after all, go on to talk about the territorial integrity of China.

And the Japanese worked that concession. And between 1912 and 1916, the Japanese made thirteen bank loans to the Chinese: the Bank of Taiwan, the Bank of Korea, the Industrial Bank of Japan. And then the Japanese really moved into high gear. Because in 1917 — and this really will test and push your sense of logic — in 1917, the Chinese entered the First World War.

Now, why the Chinese were in the First World War — why there were coolies digging trenches on the Western Front, why there were Chinese invading Siberia along with a Japanese army — that's all in the murky history of that diplomacy. The great powers of the Allied side wanted China in the war for a variety of reasons. But for Japan, you see, it was a terrific opportunity. 1917, eight loans in that one year from Japanese banks; 1918, eleven other loans. And all of those loans — like the one in the beginning of 1918, which was called the Military Preparation Loan — meant that China would get money from Japan to pour it back into Japan to buy military goods from that industrial country, and against that loan to give all kinds of concessions in mines and railroads and timber. And two offshoots of that — and note them well, and see if they don't perk up something in your thinking about this. Why? Why should the Western powers have been so willing to let the Japanese do that? Why should they have made so little protest? And remember that, in 1918, the Japanese did invade Siberia, and they did send the biggest army in the intervention against the Bolshevik Revolution, and they took Chinese troops with them. And is it so far from your imagining that, in the West, Japan was already being looked upon as a possible policeman against the spread of communism? You know, in inter-imperialist rivalries, you can put up with a great deal — with a great deal of Hitler, for example, in the 1930s — until it becomes a little bit too pressing on the market. And so it was with the Japanese.

And consider, secondly, that that Japanese operation really hit the raw nerve end of the Chinese people, and of the Chinese intelligentsia especially. So you get the Nishihara Loan of January of 1918, which was the loan that implied that Japan was supplying military equipment to China, but which in effect said that the Chinese army and navy would now go under Japanese command, essentially. And that Nishihara Loan really roused a tremendous kind of nationalist spirit in China, so that in May of 1918, a year before the May 4th event of 1919, students are already marching in Peking, demanding that the Japanese be stopped in China. And the Federation of Chinese Chambers of Commerce supports the action of the students.

And think how it is in those early [months] of 1919, when the Chinese send a delegation to Paris, to the peace conference, and you see Wilsonism is everywhere. And Wilson even translates into Chinese, and is just as Presbyterian in Chinese [*laughter, murmuring*]. And so Wilson is talking about self-determination, and the Chinese listen to him, and they don't know that Wilson really means Poles and Czechs — they think he must mean Chinese and Filipinos. And he doesn't. And so the Chinese get to Paris in 1919, and they say, "We want an end to these unequal treaties. We

want an end to extraterritoriality, an end to the tariff restriction so that we can put a decent tariff on our industrial goods. And we want, after all, an end to these spheres of influence." And nobody listens. These are powers that have empires, powers that have interests in China. And the Chinese delegation goes home very disenchanted.

And all the while there are new social forces. And these new social forces become crucial in that evolution of the Chinese Revolution. Paradox! And the paradox is that while you have this terrific political and diplomatic decomposition, you have between 1914 and 1920 the "golden age of native Chinese capitalism" — or so the Chinese historians persist in calling it. What you have, you see, is what you have in every Third World country: you have a moment during the First World War when it is possible for a national bourgeoisie to begin to found plants, to begin to invest its capital, because the industrial powers of the West are really preoccupied with the war, and they can't send goods into their traditional Third World markets. Look at the statistics on tariffs. The tariffs, for example, on imports into China, which are an index, after all, of how much goods is coming in from the outside. The tariffs total \$213 million in 1914 in China; in 1919, they totaled \$16 million, which shows that there is a cutting off of these exports from the outside. You see what that means: that there is a moment when...

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... went from just a comprador bourgeoisie, really client to the West, a bourgeoisie that begins to make certain investments in the textile trade, even the metals trade, and begins to organize its chambers of commerce.

But in addition to that, you get the emergence for the first time of an industrial proletariat in China. Now, note that well. Because, you see, the Chinese Communists will make great issue for a long period of time about the fact that China is becoming proletarianized. But note the data very well. When you talk about a working class, a Chinese proletariat, and what role it can play, and whether it can possibly really make a revolution in China — note that by 1921, the year that the Chinese Communist Party was founded, that there were in total 1.5 million whom you would consider industrial workers in the modern sector of the Chinese economy. A million and a half in a population which in 1921 was about 460 million in China. You see the point: that 80% of the population is peasant; that you have this growing, but still tiny, proletariat.

But it's more than that. It's a proletariat which, by way of its recruitment, by way of its condition, by way of its consciousness, is extremely primitive. You're talking about the most primitive kind of working class. In 1919, at the time of the May 4th episode, there were very few who were second-generation Chinese workers. You see how they're brought into the textile mills or

brought into the mines, generally through middlemen — generally through recruiters who go into the villages and get the excess population, and that excess population generally young boys and young girls, brought into the city on labor contracts that really are almost slave contracts; that these intermediaries keep part of the pay — that these young boys and girls working in the Shanghai textile mills, or where have you, really have just enough to survive, to reproduce themselves. And I want you to remember that, because I want you to remember what this Chinese Revolution is: that you're talking about people living as late as 1920 and '21, all through the '20s, really at the lowest conceivable levels in the entire industrial universe.

All of that is true. But by 1918, you can identify in China about twenty-five real strikes. A very tiny number, but I underscore it because the workers will participate in the May 4th episode of 1919. And they are beginning, if you please, to look for their form.

And with these social classes, yet a third facet of it. And that, of course, the radical intelligentsia. And that is all-important, and it's out of that that the Chinese Communist movement will originally be made. And when we talk about this radical intelligentsia, we're talking about people like yourselves: people who go to the modern schools in China, in those modern schools that really are part of that reform movement of that first decade of the twentieth century. Look, that in the modern schools in 1906, you have 400,000 students; in 1919, you have 4 million. In the University of Peking, you have 800 students in 1912, you have 2,500 students in 1919, and you have literally hundreds of students studying in universities outside. You begin to get a liberal intelligentsia — people who become doctors and scientists and journalists, and those who are in the university still studying — and they have a different outlook.

And they pose a problem. And the problem for this intelligentsia centers around a question. And the question is: Why did that revolution of 1911 and '12 fail? And you see what the answer has to be: that the answer has to be that that revolution only attacked the political structure, that it only attacked the Manchu; that it changed, politically, the ruler, but that it did not destroy the social and economic armature of the country.

And, consequently, this radical intelligentsia begins to say, "No, a revolution must go further." And it begins to speculate around with radical ideologies. And it's fascinating to note that in the years between 1910 and 1917, it was not Marxism, for example, which really began to grab up the most radical of these intellectuals, but it was anarchism. And Chinese anarchism played its role. And much of it came, after all, from France, and from those Chinese students who were settled at that particular time in France. But listen: it is Liu Shih-fu who is the great figure in Chinese anarchism, who founds in 1913 his Society of Conscience, and who makes, and I quote it, his famous Twelve Prohibitions. And see if you understand what this means. Here is a

Chinese anarchist, Liu Shih-fu, and he is telling the Chinese, "Look, if you want to liberate yourself, there are certain things you can no longer tolerate." See if you cannot see the underpinnings of a kind of cultural revolution in there, that you really are making a *tabula rasa*, and that is really the part that anarchism will play: "The Twelve Prohibitions are the source of our liberation. And they are: no meat, no wine, no tobacco, no servants, no marriage, no family names, no bureaucratic posts, no use of rituals, no parliamentary elections, no party membership, no military service, no religion." Well... that covers a lot [*laughter*]. And what he means, after all — like the Situationists in May of '68 — what he means is that you make that kind of frontal attack in which you say, "You see, all of that is in the museum, all of that belongs to the past. It has nothing to do with the materials of the society we want to build." But it is not a strategy of change.

And so the radical intelligentsia, once it passes through its anarchist sieve, still begins to look for models of change. And then, you see, comes that Russian Revolution. That Russian Revolution... and it is Li Ta-chao... It is Li Ta-chao who first really begins to make a kind of statement about what that Bolshevik Revolution means to China. And it is Li Ta-chao, one of the great founders of Chinese communism — about whom my colleague [at UW–Madison] Maurice Meisner has written the very best biography — it was Li Ta-chao who says in 1919 that the Russian Revolution, "Yes, yes: that is a strategy of change." And what the Chinese need is a strategy. And it is that sense of action, or of organization for action, which even precedes Marxism in China.

And all of that plays into the 4th of May. And so I say two things about the 4th of May. First of all, that it is not fortuitous, it is not accidental. It comes at the crest of certain very real changes: intellectual, political, social, and economic. And I say a second thing about it: that what the essence or the meaning of the 4th of May of 1919 is, it is that it is the first great collective expression of the chasm, or the gap, that exists between the new social forces in China and the *de facto* and *de jure* rulers of that country; that the chasm, or the gap, is very wide and the 4th of May proves it.

And what is it concretely? It begins on the 4th of May of 1919, and it has two stages. There is a so-called Peking stage, and there is a Shanghai stage. And the Peking stage has to do with students. And on the 1st of May, the word spreads around China that the Paris Peace Conference has turned the leaseholds and the concessions in the Shantung peninsula — in other words, in that Shantung province that the Germans have controlled as their sphere of influence — that by Articles 156 and 157 of the peace treaty, they have turned that concession over to the Japanese. And that word spreads into China through telegraph. And consequently, there is a great meeting on the 3rd of May in the University of Peking among the students. And at that meeting they

make their *mots d'ordre*, they make their slogans. And the slogans run, "Let's struggle for equality of rights," "Let's oust our traitors," "Let's unite to restore our independence," and "Let us boycott all imperialist products." And so, on the 4th of May begins this great snake dance through the city of Peking. And the students are all out, and the merchants tend to support them because the idea of boycotting Japanese goods really is very beneficial to them anyway. The next day, the 5th of May, the students form a Union of Students in Peking and call upon other students in China to join. In the following days, in every university and school center on the coasts of China, there are such demonstrations and manifestations. There are other unions of students formed until finally, on the 18th of May of 1919, comes a manifesto from Peking, from the student union, for a general strike of all students which runs this way:

"Against the foreigners to preserve our sovereignty, and against our rulers to destroy the traitors. That is our cry. We are stupefied that the government, in its two ordinances of the 14th of May, prohibits under threat of armed force all public meetings, all student interference in the domain of government policy, and represses every expression of patriotic conscience, while it turns a deaf ear when the Japanese police brutalize and oust Chinese students in Tokyo. We, students, cannot continue our studies until our consciences are clear and our minds are at ease. But we are justifiably agitated by the profound betrayal. And we call upon a general strike for the 19th of May, which we will continue until all of our great national problems are resolved."

And the strike of the 19th of May is a tremendous success. And it goes on for days. And the boycott movement becomes very profound, until such time as the Japanese government intervenes with the Chinese, and tells the Chinese government, "Now, look, suppress this thing." And the Japanese themselves land troops in certain port cities, and begin to execute students in an exemplary way until the government responds. And the Chinese government, between the 3rd and the 6th of June of 1919, arrests about 1,200 Chinese students and intellectuals, throws them into prison to suppress the movement.

And then you move to the second stage, which is the Shanghai stage. And that is the participation of the Chinese bourgeoisie and the Chinese working class of the coastal cities in this movement. Because in Shanghai, all the shopkeepers close their stores, and the workers begin to leave the factories; about 60,000 went out on strike from the factories of Shanghai. And that movement of merchants and workers spread to the other cities from Shanghai until the government capitulated. And by the end of June, it had released the prisoners, and it had dismissed from the ministry the three most pro-Japanese ministers. And it had said yes, it would not sign the Paris Peace Treaty.

And what is it about, the 4th of May? And why does it escalate into a revolution? It is, in the first place, the first ideological statement of what the Chinese Revolution will be. In that sense, Mao Tse-tung really underscored it, I think, perfectly correctly when he said that the Chinese Revolution had its seed in the 4th of May because it combined the two aspects of the Chinese Revolution. It combined, first of all, the anti-imperialism, and, secondly, what Mao always calls the anti-feudalism. In other words, it was against not only the foreigner, but against those elements of the Chinese ruling structure that permitted imperialism to get its root. Then, in the second place, the 4th of May of 1919 establishes the basis for an anti-Confucian cultural revolution.

Everything is up for grabs in those days and weeks. And I want you to understand this: that it is the Chinese family, for example, which really comes under attack. Nothing now is to be left in a museum. Everything is to be taken out into the street and examined. So that the Chinese family, attacked for its filial piety — that father should no longer dominate over children and over wife, that marriage is subject to all kinds of criticism, that women should not be forced into arranged marriage, nor should they even be forced to marry by itself — and all kinds of relationships in the domestic household, subject now to a certain kind of what we call a cultural revolution.

And finally, the 4th of May, the beginnings of a sort of Chinese capitalism: that the Chinese bourgeoisie, through the boycott movement, really got an escalation; that 1919 and 1920 and '21, that's a certain high point. But, look. The 4th of May tells you a lot. So little really came out of a movement that was so big. That because the peasants didn't move, and that because the 80% of the population in the villages were inert. And so, what you really get out of the 4th of May is a shaking out of the issues. What you get, after all, is the fact that the Chinese bourgeoisie is living a today without a tomorrow. It thinks it can make this revolution, but it can't. Because, after all, it cannot unseat either the ruling class or the foreign imperialists who will be back. And it can only do that by a peasant revolution which it is unwilling to unleash. What you get out of the 4th of May are workers and radical intellectuals. And they will play their part if they have a movement.

All of which takes us to the beginning. Because out of the 4th of May comes the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese Communist movement. Do you lose heart? The Chinese Communist Party: there were a few tiny little groups of Marxists, seven of them in China in 1920, in seven different places, their total number fifty-seven. And they were in some contact with the Russians, and they chose twelve delegates in July of 1921 to go to a founding Congress of the Chinese Communist Party. Consider it: the 1st of July of 1921, twelve Chinese in the French concession of Shanghai, hidden in a house, chased by the police, who go to a houseboat on a river outside of Hangchow, and those twelve men — all intellectuals, none of them a worker, certainly none a peasant — found the Chinese Communist Party. So don't lose heart

[laughter].

And at that very first Congress, there was debate. And there was debate between those, for example, who were the adventurers, who said, "We're founding a Communist Party, and what we must do is make no alliances with intellectuals" — and this intellectuals talking — "Now, we must go directly to the working class; we must have a clandestine organization, and we must make a revolution." That is rejected. A second group that are legal Marxists and that say, "We want simply to educate the public: to go to parliament, to go to the press, and to educate on the issues that Marxism throws some light upon." That is rejected.

What is accepted at that founding Congress by these twelve men, only one of whom really remained with continuity in the Chinese Communist movement — that Mao Tse-tung who was at that founding Congress — and those twelve men decided that the Party would be legal and clandestine both: that it would have a clandestine apparatus, that it would fight for a revolution of the working class, and that it would do that by both legal and extralegal propaganda, but that it would not make an alliance with the bourgeoisie. It would not make an alliance, in other words, with the Kuomintang, which was already the line of the Comintern.

And that First Congress of July of 1921 — so very inauspicious, so meaningless in terms of numbers — and yet that First Congress did something that was important. It drew these Marxists together. It gave them centralization, it gave them a party, and it gave them a strategy, whether they would change it or not. In other words, it gave them coherence. And that was important.

But the deficiencies were upon them at once. The question is: How do twelve men change a society of 460 million? Now, that question, quite obviously, means that you must have a funnel, a funnel through which you can work and operate. And the Chinese Communists cannot go and convert a working class, and they certainly can't go and convert the peasantry. How is it that they will be able even to begin to spread the word? The funnel will become the Kuomintang. It is the Kuomintang, after all, which is larger, which is nationalist, which shares the same first objective — which is to end warlordism, to end the Peking government, to make a strong central government. That is the aim of Sun Yat-sen. They share that particular goal.

And, consequently, the years between 1921 and '27, until that 12th of April of 1927 — when the Kuomintang under Chiang Kai-shek chucks the Communists out and breaks that alliance — those first six years are known in the history of Chinese communism as the years of the first phase of the civil war. The first phase of the civil war, by which we mean that coalition, or combination, of the Communists and the Kuomintang to fight against the first and the immediate enemy: that enemy, the force of feudalism (in Mao's terminology), namely, the warlords and the

government at Peking.

But it has a lot of problems. And the problem is: How do you cooperate? And there is one of two possible alternatives. Either the Communists and the Kuomintang cooperate, a bourgeois party and (presumably) a party standing for the working class, they cooperate either on the basis of a united front — in other words, they make a common program and fight side-by-side; or the Communists give up their identity and go into the Kuomintang. And if they go into the Kuomintang, do they go in as a party or do they go in as individuals? That becomes the critical question. At the Second Party Congress in July of 1922, the Chinese Communists took the position that they couldn't give up their identity. They are, after all, for social revolution; they're not for a capitalist revolution. And, consequently, they will make a united front. That's all.

But that's not what Moscow wants. And so it isn't up, really, to the Chinese Communists. And it isn't up to that first Secretary General, Ch'en [Tu-hsiu]; it isn't up to anybody but the Moscow agents. And so it is that, on the 26th of January of 1923, there is an agreement made. And the agreement they made is between Dr. Sun Yat-sen, who is still alive and who is still functioning at the head of the Kuomintang, and an emissary from the Comintern. And that emissary, Adolph Joffe. And Adolph Joffe, a distinguished person in Bolshevik ranks — a man who had been the chief negotiator at Brest-Litovsk, who at one point was an ambassador to Berlin from Moscow — and Adolph Joffe comes in December of 1922 to China, and in January of '23, he makes negotiations with Sun. But listen to this: Sun Yat-sen, at that same time, had been making overtures to the United States. Sun Yat-sen had been making, through the American embassy in China, overtures to try to get the United States to intervene along with several other Western powers to end warlordism in China. In other words, Sun Yat-sen's first choice really was to turn to the West. His first choice was to turn to what he thought were the liberal, capitalist democracies to help the Kuomintang to establish its integrity. And, of course, he fell upon deaf ears.

And it's in that context that you have to understand what the Russians do when they make the kind of agreement that they do make in the Joffe-Sun Yat-sen relationship and accords. And listen to the document that is signed on the 26th of January over the heads of Chinese Communists, small party as it is. In those accords, we read this: "Dr. Sun Yat-sen thinks that the Communist system, and even that of soviets, cannot be introduced into China where there are no conditions favorable to their application. And these sentiments are entirely shared by Mr. Joffe." Now, that is point one, which is that the Russians are saying to the Chinese Kuomintang, to the Chinese Nationalist Party, no way do the Russians think that communism can triumph in China. No way are they interested in establishing a system of soviets, which runs completely counter to what Lenin had said at the Second Congress of the Comintern in July of 1920, when he in effect

said that in those backward, agrarian zones of the Third World, precisely there you can establish agrarian communes or agrarian soviets.

So you say, first of all, that communism is not the goal. Both Dr. Sun and Mr. Joffe also think that the most important and urgent task for China is that of its unification and national independence; in other words, the movement is to be one for the centralization of China under the leadership of the bourgeoisie. And the third point that is made in this agreement is that the Kuomintang will accept the collaboration of the Communists, that the Communists will enter the Kuomintang. But they will not enter it as a party: they will enter it as individuals. They will never be able to be a separate faction within that particular party.

Now, you see, when the Chinese Communist Central Committee heard this, and when they debated it in April of 1923, they rejected it out of hand — until Moscow got to them. And when the Third Party Congress meets in June of 1923, it is the Secretary General, Ch'en, who pushes through this position of the Sun and Joffe Accords. And, consequently, the Chinese Communists agree to enter into the Kuomintang as individuals. And you know what follows.

What follows is a lot of collaboration. What follows is something quite remarkable: that the Communists do go into the Kuomintang, that they give the party something it's never had. They give it organization, they give it discipline, they give it a sense of propaganda, they give it a kind of a sense of how to meet the masses. And they give it also Russian help: Russian help from the point of view of military advisors, from the point of view even of economic help. This coalition is terribly important. You have Chiang Kai-shek going off to Moscow in October of 1923 to learn how to organize an army that will really make that march northward and fight against those warlords; you get Soviet advisors helping Chiang Kai-shek in May of 1924 to establish a military academy at Whampoa, where the new military tactics will be used. All of that kind of collaboration occurs.

But you see what it means. Is it communism? Is it a revolution? Is it the revolution that you really want to fight for, or that is possible or potential in China? Stalin justifies it in May of 1925. Stalin, for all that we appreciate of Stalin's vigor, he is not a theoretician of the very highest order [*laughter*]. So Stalin writes in May of 1925 that this coalition is a revolutionary act, because the Kuomintang is now a party of workers and peasants in alliance with what he calls the revolutionary petty-bourgeoisie.

All of which was perfect nonsense, as was proved when Chiang Kai-shek threw the Communists out in April of 1927. The whole tragedy is that there was fair warning that the Communists were walking into an immense trap by simply giving up their identity. And the warning was made

after the death of Sun Yat-sen. Sun Yat-sen died of cancer on the 12th of March of 1925. And at that point, Chiang Kai-shek — a terribly ambitious man, the head of the army of the Kuomintang, the one who wants to be the President of the Chinese Republic, the one who wants to have both civilian and military power in his hand — Chiang Kai-shek goes into high gear.

And, consequently, before you march northward — before you begin in July of 1926 that historic and famous march northward in which the Kuomintang armies move, and they oust the warlords, and they actually make propaganda among peasants and among workers in which you really begin to diffuse that revolution — before that long march begins, that march northward in July of 1926, Chiang Kai-shek shows his hand. He shows it on the night of the 20th and 21st of March of 1926 in Canton, because Canton is a radical city. It is the seat of the Kuomintang government, or of the Republican government established by the Kuomintang. Wang Ching-wei, a left-wing Kuomintang guy, is the president. Chiang Kai-shek wants the power. And what does he do on that night of the 21st of March? What he does is to arrest certain syndicalists and socialists who are there among the Chinese. He arrests certain workers who are on strike. But mainly he arrests Communists, and he arrests Russian advisors and asks them to leave Canton. What Chiang Kai-shek does in that historic night of the 20th and 21st of March is to take power in the city of Canton. And he takes power, and Wang Ching-wei, who is the president, flees. And Chiang Kai-shek is now both the president and the head of the armed forces.

And, at that point, the Secretary General of the Chinese Communist Party told the Russians, "We'd better get out of this alliance." And the Russians said, "No, you stay right in it." And the Central Executive of the Kuomintang then meets on the 15th of May of 1926, right before the march northward begins. And Chiang Kai-shek pushes through a group of resolutions: that the Chinese Communists will hold no leadership positions in the Kuomintang, that they will give a list of all of their memberships to the executive of the Kuomintang, that they will never form a faction, that they will never hold more than one-third of the minor bureaucratic positions in the party; in other words, they are to be restricted. And the march northward begins. You see the point.

The point is the inevitability of conflict within this coalition. The point is that the first phase of the civil war will surely end by 1927. And then that phase that you know so well will begin: the phase in which your own policymakers, in which Americans had the illusion that the Kuomintang really counted for the masses of China, or could — when in reality, it was way out of touch with them.

All of that takes us to a historic moment, the moment that really obsessed [French novelist] André Malraux: the moment that is so absolutely classic, when not only do you have to reshape

and shake out your strategy, but you have to think about where the people of China really are. And I tell you that it is something rather heartening that Mao Tse-tung was born in Hunan province, and consequently knew that there were peasants in China [*laughter*]. And it took him a very long time to make that point. Because it is not in 1927, after the split, that Mao Tse-tung comes to the head of that party. It is not until 1935, when the Chinese Communists are well along on their historic Long March — a march where will catch up next time. [*applause*]