

Roland Boer

Socialism with Chinese Characteristics

A Guide for Foreigners

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For Domenico Losurdo (1941–2018)

Preface

Let me begin with a quotation from Mao Zedong:

Some foreigners say that our ideological reform is brainwashing. As I see it, they are correct in what they say. It is washing brains, that's what it is! This brain of mine was washed to become what it is. After joining the revolution, it was slowly washed, washed for several decades. What I received before was all bourgeois education, and even some feudal education. (Mao Zedong, quoted in Shao 2017, 2)¹

Mao was speaking to Chinese students studying in Moscow in 1957, but his words are still resonant today. For me at least, the in-depth study of Chinese Marxism, of socialism with Chinese characteristics, has required a washing of my brain, a washing that has taken a dozen years or more. Why? When I first came to China, I thought I was open-minded, thought that I did not assume the frameworks and assumptions with which I had been brought up and educated. How wrong I was. Like other foreigners, I had developed an opinion about China that was quite erroneous. This is particularly so for those from the small number of countries that make up the 'West' (containing about 14% of the global population). I have found that those who have grown up in socialist countries—past and present—find it much easier to understand socialism with Chinese characteristics. This is also the case for the many who come from developing countries, for there too is a living memory of the experience of colonial depredation at the hands of the 'West'. So if you are like me, having been brought up and educated in one of the few Western countries, then you may well need to engage in a process of washing your brain so as to be able to understand socialism with Chinese characteristics, or sinified Marxism.

Another way of putting it is 'liberating thought', a term that became a central feature of Deng Xiaoping's tenure and crucial in the launching the Reform and Opening-Up. For Deng, liberating thought entailed liberation from old dogmas and

¹To set the context: the text I have quoted comes from comments Mao made on the evening of 17 November, 1957. Mao had led a delegation to Moscow, from 2 to 21 November, 1957, for a celebration of the fortieth anniversary of the October Revolution, and for two congresses of Communist and Workers' Parties. He also engaged in a whirlwind of other activities. After much anticipation, Mao arrived at Moscow University on the evening of 17 November to speak with and answer questions from more than 3,000 Chinese students studying in Moscow.

assumptions about what socialism should be and indeed what capitalism was. To be clear: this is not some liberal ‘freedom of expression’ that simply reinforces Western liberal frameworks. Instead, the liberation of thought is central to the correct theoretical line of Marxism itself: Marxism is not a dogma, but a guide to action, a method for analysis and a framework—in China—for the construction of socialism.

By now it should be obvious that I will have much to say concerning Marxism in this book. The simple reason is that Marxism is front and centre in the Chinese project of constructing socialism. Socialism? Yes: I agree with the vast majority of Chinese scholars and common people—along with not a few in many other parts of the world—that the Chinese project is indeed a socialist project. Thus, if you want to understand China, you need to understand Marxism, especially Chinese Marxism. Those who ignore Chinese Marxism risk profound misunderstandings of China and its path. My primary focus is the Reform and Opening-Up, launched by Deng Xiaoping and the CPC in 1978. I will also have much to say at various points on the longer Marxist tradition—especially on the development of contradiction analysis and the theory of socialist democracy. But my focus remains the distinctly Marxist project of the Reform and Opening-Up.

As I indicate in the introductory chapter, this book primarily uses research undertaken by Chinese Marxist scholars in order to understand socialism with Chinese characteristics. This research has thus far been overwhelmingly published in the Chinese language and has not been studied outside China as much it should have been studied. Although there are some notable exceptions—Domenico Losurdo, Colin Mackerras, Nick Knight, Stefano Azzarà, and Barry Sautman—I do not find much Western material on China particularly useful. Most of these latter works fall into the trap of ‘using Western categories to understand China [*yixi jiezhong*]’.² Even more, when an occasional Western Marxist feels called upon to opine about China, we find that such an effort ‘uses Western categories to understand Marx [*yixi jiema*]’. For these reasons and more, it is necessary to deploy the extraordinary depth and range of Chinese Marxist scholarship to understand socialism with Chinese characteristics.

Many are those whom I need to thank for discussing and debating the material presented in this book. They include Colin Mackerras, Stefano Azzarà, Antonis Balasopoulos, Yiannis Kokosalakis, Tamara Prosic, Carsten Boyer Thøgersen, Sean Sayers, Geoff Boucher, James Juniper, and—among local CPA branch members—Grant Osland, Peter Rønne, Brynn Lewis, Andrew Rayment, Darren Ward, and Dave. In China, my long path to understanding socialism with Chinese characteristics has included vital conversations with Yang Huilin, Zang Fengyu, Zhang Shuangli, Zhang Jing, Zhu Yanming, Yu Min, and more recently Hong Xiaonan, Fang Yumei, Liu Guixiang, Chen Xiaogui, Qu Hong, and Yan Ping. I hope I have done justice to their many insights and helpful comments, both witting and unwitting. As ever, Christina

²In the first Chapter (1.4.1) I provide a typology of sub-genres of many Western works on China: secular apocalypse (‘China doomer’), dystopian fiction (and its associated ‘atrocious propaganda’), ghost story, conspiracy theory (and its betrayal narrative), Orientalist mystery, and sectarian intolerance (a distinct feature of Western Marxism).

Petterson has heard and discussed most with me, as part of the division of labour in our common project.

The book is dedicated to Domenico Losurdo, from whom I have learnt much. Although we met on only one occasion before he died, that time was a week together in China. We participated in two conferences, one in Beijing and one in Shanghai, travelling by train between the two cities. During that time, we talked much and found much common ground. At one point, Losurdo said to me: ‘You need to be patient; we are part of the mainstream’. Of course, our mutual appreciation of and desire to understand the many developments of Marxism from Russia to China, especially during the era of socialist construction after a proletarian revolution, means that we are in fact part of the mainstream. This means too that all of the developments in Chinese Marxism, and thus of socialism with Chinese characteristics, is indeed the mainstream. This book is an effort to present central features of this mainstream development to those who may know relatively little but desire to know more.

Dalian, Liaoning, China
February 2021

Roland Boer

Reference

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About the Author

Roland Boer is a professor in the School of Marxism Studies, Dalian University of Technology, China. His research area is (comparative) Marxist philosophy and he is the first non-Chinese citizen to be employed in a School of Marxism Studies in China. Among many publications, he has most recently published a book on Stalin (Springer, 2017) and will soon have a book published with the title of *Friedrich Engels and the Foundations of Socialist Governance*.

Chapter 1

Introduction: Marxism as China's Special Skill



1.1 General

The best way to understand China and its path is through Chinese Marxism. It is as simple and as complex as that. I should hardly need to point out that the need to understand China's path grows by the day, especially as its rejuvenation (*fixing*) gathers pace and hits ever-new targets. In light of this situation, it seems as though nearly everyone in the world now has an opinion on China, now matter whether they know anything about the place or not. But what soon becomes apparent amongst all the various opinions and indeed scholarly works from other parts of the world is that very few of them pay any attention to Chinese Marxism, or indeed socialism with Chinese characteristics. Even less are prepared to devote themselves to the arduous but rewarding task of studying what Chinese Marxist scholars themselves have to say about China's path. This is precisely what I do in this book: I offer a careful presentation of socialism with Chinese characteristics in light of the research undertaken by Chinese Marxist scholars, research that has been overwhelmingly published in the Chinese language.

In light of this research, it is quite very that China is vigorously following the socialist road and that Marxism is in the driver's seat on that road. So let us plunge straight in and see what it means for Marxism to be the core and centre of the Chinese project. Marxism—and especially Marxist philosophy—is regarded as China's 'special skill' (Xi 2013b, 404; 2020b, 5). The four-character Chinese term—*kanjia benling*—means a stock-in-trade, a special knack, a particular and honed skill that one has for—literally—'looking after the home' (Yang M. 2016).

1.2 Marxism as China's Special Skill

Some may be surprised: how can it be that a major global power has Marxist philosophy as its special skill? Not merely philosophy, which may seem surprising enough

in itself, but Marxist philosophy. Obviously, we need to dig deeper, so I will examine three inter-related texts by none other than Xi Jinping: the first concerns the central role of Marxist philosophy and the social sciences; the second deals with dialectical materialism; and the third concerns historical materialism (Xi 2016c, 2019a, 2020b). The first has become a much-referenced landmark text, initially delivered as a speech at a major forum on philosophy and the social sciences in May of 2016. I will give it extended attention in a moment, but before doing so we need to ask: what is meant by Marxist philosophy?

1.2.1 *Defining Marxist Philosophy*

The answer appears in the other two pieces mentioned: Marxist philosophy entails dialectical materialism as its method and historical materialism as its application. This is a mainstream definition of Marxist philosophy, which has its roots in Marx and Engels, was explicitly identified in Soviet Marxism, and has been developed further in Chinese Marxism. You will find some in a few small corners of the world suggesting that only 'historical materialism' is appropriate, but this is a view from a small tributary and not the mainstream.¹ As for dialectical materialism (Xi 2019a), it entails four key propositions: (1) The world is unified in matter and matter determines consciousness, so policies should be developed in light of objective reality; (2) Since the movement of contradictions is a determining feature of matter, one should strengthen one's awareness of such contradictions and seek to resolve them; (3) The fundamental method of materialist dialectics is to think dialectically and develop the ability to deal with complex situations and problems; (4) Theory has a crucial role—think of Marxist theory—in terms of the dialectical relationship between knowledge and practice, but theoretical innovation should always be based on practice, on seeking truth from facts. In sum: as a method dialectical materialism is concerned with the inherent contradictions in matter, nature, and human society, with the need for dialectical analysis of such contradictions so to develop appropriate theories, policies, and programs—including those of governance and economic planning. I will have more to say in the second chapter on 'contradiction analysis', which is another way of speaking about dialectical materialism as it has encountered the Chinese philosophical tradition.

¹The effort to separate Engels from Marx and thus from the whole development of dialectical materialism is a wayward development in Western Marxism (see Kangal 2020, 9–42, for a comprehensive overview of this debate). The best approach to the division of labour between Marx and Engels is in terms of parallels and reciprocal work (Griese 1987; Stanley 1989). Chinese scholars agree. After comprehensive assessments of the Western debate, they point out that while the 'complete agreement' theory is careless, the 'complete opposition' theory is untenable (Zhao 2016). Instead, they prefer an approach of 'agreement based on differences', or 'co-creation and complementarity [*tongchuang hubu*]' (Huang G. 2016, 2017). After all, it was Engels (1892, 111) who coined the term 'historical materialism', while Marx (1880, 542) spoke of 'scientific socialism'.

In regard to historical materialism (Xi 2020b), this is the specific application of a Marxist method in order to understand human social development. In this case, there are three core principles: (1) Analyse and develop policies in light of basic social contradictions, which should be understood specifically in terms of the contradictions between the means and relations of production, between the economic base and superstructure (politics, culture, philosophy, and so on); (2) Although productive forces provide the material prerequisite for all social life, so much so that the basic task of socialism is to liberate the forces of production so as to improve the lives of all, there is also a complex dialectical relation between the economic base and the superstructure, and between the means and relations of production so that constant adjustments are needed; (3) People are the makers of history, in the sense that—to gloss Marx²—while objective realities determine the direction of a society, initiative and innovation from the common people can bring about changes in this reality.

This twofold definition of Marxist philosophy and its method is perhaps a little abstract and may be somewhat unfamiliar to those not aware of the Marxist tradition, but I have brought this definition to the fore in my treatment here to show how important it is in China—especially during the Reform and Opening-Up.³ Notably, the texts by Xi Jinping concerning dialectical and historical materialism were initially delivered as relatively brief contributions to collective study sessions of the CPC Central Committee's Politburo early in Xi Jinping's tenure.⁴ Obviously, Xi was keen to clarify the foundations of his tenure as general secretary of the CPC and as president of the People's Republic. Much of the rest of this book will unfold various aspects of this definition, but in what follows I would like to discuss the longer and more detailed speech on philosophy and the social sciences.

²This sense is also captured by the Chinese term *mingyun* (命运), in which one can change one's destiny by concerted effort. As for Marx, 'Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past' (Marx 1852a, 96–97; 1852b, 103).

³Marxist philosophy has been given a significant boost during the Reform and Opening-Up, which has entailed a move away from what is called the 'textbook' approach (when positions were repeated ad nauseam in one work after another) to profound innovation. Although the topic itself requires another study, I cite here the main works that provide surveys of the development of Marxist philosophy, precisely during a period (since 1978) that has been very much under-studied outside China (Wang Wei 2015; Chen Xueming et al. 2016; Ren 2017; Chen S. 2018; Li X. 2018; Mei 2018; Wang H. 2018; Wang N. 2018; Yu and He 2018).

⁴A fuller list of the study sessions that dealt explicitly with Marxism is as follows: 3 December, 2013: 11th study session of the 18th CPC Central Committee Politburo, on the theme of 'The fundamental principles and methodology of historical materialism' (Xi 2020b); 23 January, 2015: 20th study session of 18th CPC Central Committee Politburo, on the theme of 'The fundamental principles and methodology of dialectical materialism' (Xi 2019a); 23 November, 2015: 28th study session of the 18th CPC Central Committee Politburo, on the theme of 'The basic principles and methodology of Marxist political economy' (Xi 2020a); 29 September, 2017: 43rd study session of the 18th CPC Central Committee Politburo, on the theme of 'Marxism in the contemporary world and its influence'; 23 April, 2018: fifth study session of the 19th CPC Central Committee Politburo, on the theme of 'The Communist Manifesto and its significance for the times'.

1.2.2 *Philosophy and the Social Sciences*

The text begins by emphasising that philosophy and the social sciences are as important as the natural sciences in a country's development, indeed that the former are a benchmark of a country's overall level.⁵ Here Xi quotes Engels: 'a nation that wants to climb the pinnacles of science cannot possibly manage without theoretical thought for a moment' (Xi 2016c, 2; Engels 1882c, 437; 1882b, 332; 1882a, 340). Further, every great leap of human civilisation is intimately connected with the transformational knowledge and theoretical guidance of philosophy and the social sciences—as the histories of Western Europe and of China show. Already we can see how remarkable the speech is: it would be difficult to find another leader of a major country emphasising the central role of philosophy and the social sciences. From my own experience in Western countries, I have seen these disciplines not merely restricted to small university departments, but also progressively whittled down and abolished since they are seen as 'useless' and 'idle' pursuits. Not so in China and not so for Xi Jinping.

However, it is not merely philosophy as such, or indeed the social sciences as such. Xi's historical narrative concerning China moves from its ancient philosophical endeavours, through its colonial humiliation, to the arrival of Marxism in China. Indeed, it was this arrival, initially enabled by 'the report of the cannons of the October Revolution' in Russia, that ushered in the contemporary era of philosophy and the social sciences. As we have seen, it is explicitly Marxist philosophy that Xi has in mind, which has guided China's path for a century (Liu 2015). At the same time, Xi emphasises that philosophy and the social sciences in China leave much to be desired in today's rapidly changing world, so much so that they are not really living up to the calling of the era. What era? 'China is experiencing the most extensive and profound social changes in its history, and it is carrying out the most ambitious and uniquely practical innovation in human history' (Xi 2016c, 4). A tall claim, perhaps, but Xi has in mind the two centenary goals of 2021 and 2049, with the aims of achieving a moderately well-off, healthy, and peaceful country (*xiaokang*) and then a 'strong socialistically modernised country [*shehuizhuyi xiandaihua qiangguo*]'. For a socialist project, these goals are unprecedented, especially when we keep in mind that China is already the most powerful socialist country in human history. For Xi, however, the standard and level of Chinese philosophy and social sciences is not commensurate with the country's national strength and international status. The message to the philosophers and social scientists: live up to the calling, stand at the forefront of these developments, guide them, innovate, and become world leaders. In short, lift your game.

When reading the text of this speech, I try to imagine what was going through the minds of those present, from well-known scholars to aspiring students. Would they be inspired by such words, or would they be daunted by the challenge of a comprehensive shakeup of the whole system in China so that philosophy and the social sciences

⁵I recommend a number of widely-read studies of the speech as a whole (Chen Xixi 2016; Jiang Q. 2016; Yang J. 2016).

would be at the forefront nationally and internationally? Add to this the fact that Marxism is to provide the overall framework and leading position for all such research and innovation and I can imagine not a few quailing at the task. On a smaller scale, I have been present at a dinner where the dean of a School of Marxism—the nerve centre of Chinese universities—stipulated to all present that their research should be focused on Marxism and that it should seek not merely to be published in the best presses and journals, but that it should also seek to contribute to society as a whole. More than one person present confided in me that this was a major call indeed.

Xi's speech provides concrete proposals for a qualitative improvement in the way Marxism should guide the development of philosophy and the social sciences: (1) The integration of Marxism's basic principles and methods with China's rich history, as well as drawing upon positive developments throughout the world, albeit within the framework of Marxism; (2) The need for profound innovation and breakthroughs in dealing with new problems; (3) The development a comprehensive system of research that includes the whole range of other disciplines, increased international engagement, and the necessary resources to attract the best talents; (4) The improvement of the CPC's leadership, not merely in enabling a whole spate of improvements in philosophy and the social sciences, but in the fabric of the Party itself so that advanced Marxist philosophy is at the core of the Party's agenda. Clearly, some hard work was needed in 2016 to ensure that Marxism would once again become the over-arching framework for all pursuits (Deng C. 2014). Concrete work began immediately,⁶ and I have witnessed at many levels how this call to qualitative improvement is bearing fruit, from the transformation of Schools of Marxism into the nerve centres of universities to the growth of high-quality international journals published in English.⁷

But one may wonder: is it wise to make philosophy and the social sciences serve a specific agenda? Should they not be 'free' to pursue their various avenues for the sake of knowledge itself? Xi addresses this question specifically, pointing out that all depends on the overall framework and value system. Thus, the very terms I have used in these questions arise from the Western liberal tradition, in which such disciplines provided the means by which 'the Western world studied itself, explained its own functioning, the better to control what was happening' (Wallerstein 2011, 264). Xi points out that there is no 'pure' philosophy, for it all depends on the question, 'for whom?' For the minority or the majority, for intellectuals in ivory towers or for

⁶The speech was soon followed by a key document from the CPC Central Committee, 'Opinions on Speeding Up the Construction of Philosophy and the Social Sciences with Chinese Characteristics', along with pieces by and interviews with Chen Baosheng, Minister of Education, and Wang Weiguang, president of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), which itself underwent a major and well-overdue overhaul (CPC Central Committee 2017; Guo J. 2017; Chen B. 2017a; 2017b; Wang Weiguang 2017).

⁷Xi quotes Engels again to stress the point that much work is to be done: 'The development of the materialist conception in respect of even a single historical example was a scientific task requiring years of quiet research, for it is evident that mere phrases can achieve nothing here and that only an abundance of critically examined historical material which has been completely mastered can make it possible to solve such a problem' (Xi 2016c, 6; Engels 1859a, 598; 1859c, 471; 1859b, 470).

‘the people as centre [*yi renmin wei zhongxin*]’? That said, Marxism is by no means a closed system, a ‘dogma [*jiaoyi*]’ or ‘doctrine [*jiaotiao*]’ that means the end of free intellectual inquiry. On the contrary, it is an open and problem-oriented system, a ‘starting point for further research and a method for such research’ (Xi 2016c, 7; Engels 1895b, 691; 1895a, 428; see also Xi 2011, 16–17). Indeed, a Marxist framework is arguably even more open than the liberal tradition’s empty formulae.

This is all very well, but is this emphasis on Marxist philosophy and social science no more than an academic pursuit, restricted to the ivory towers of research institutes and universities? One may be tempted by this Western perspective, especially if one focuses only on the academic reforms begun by Hu Jintao that led to Marxism becoming a discipline in its own right, along with six sub-disciplines.⁸ In his speech, Xi acknowledges that this had been a problem in some quarters, along with lack of competence, the devolution into jargon and textbook language, the sense that Marxism was out date and simply ‘ideological’, indeed that China was no longer pursuing Marxism at all (Xi 2016c, 5). Clearly, this situation was unacceptable and one of the effects of the speech was to deal with such problems through improving the quality and focus of compulsory courses in Marxism in high schools and universities, through programs to attract the best students into Marxist programs (who in the past tended to go to other disciplines), and in providing significant structural and financial support (Xi 2016a). That it entailed weeding out the relatively few liberals and anti-Marxists goes without saying, a process that I have witnessed in different quarters.

However, there is a deeper issue here that goes to the very heart of academic research in China. As Chang Gaixiang puts it, philosophy—*zhexue*, a loan word via Japanese—in China has a history of maxims from the dialogues of sages rather than the construction of abstract systems of thought. While this has led some Western philosophers to look down on the Chinese tradition, it means that philosophy is not the ‘mere pursuit of intellectual understanding’ or the pleasure of constructing systems of thought, but devotion to the ‘activities and realities of life’. Philosophy exists as a way of life, is integrated with life and seeks to improve life (Chang Gaixiang 2018, 18; see also Qiao 2014; Wang H. 2018, 24). Or, as Xi Jinping puts it in his speech, the great achievements of philosophy and the social sciences have been created in ‘answering and solving the major problems faced by humanity and society’. Researchers live in a real society, so much so that without flesh-and-blood human beings, philosophy ‘would have no attraction, appeal, influence or vitality’ (Xi 2016c, 6). Thus philosophy, and especially Marxist philosophy, is not seen in China

⁸There were a number of important documents produced by the CPC Central Committee in 2004 and by the Ministry of Education in 2005 that began a process of reforming the structure of Marxism education (CPC Central Committee 2004a; 2004b; Xuanchuanbu he jiaoyubu 2005; Jiaoyubu 2005). One result was the establishment of what became the Academy of Marxism, within the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, and another was the identification of five specialisations of Marxism: Basic Principles of Marxism; History and Development of Marxism; Studies of Sinified Marxism; International Marxism Studies; Ideological and Political Education. To these a sixth was added a little later: Basic Studies of Modern and Contemporary Chinese History. These now structure all Marxist educational programs in China.

as merely a 'scientific' or 'academic' pursuit, a preserve of scholars divorced from everyday realities. Indeed, this approach—so common in 'Western' academia—is seen as a distortion and weakening of Marxism itself (Chen S. 2018, 6). Instead, philosophers and social scientists are by very definition engaged or organic intellectuals, focused on solving the major problems of the day. They also have the major responsibility of training 'the builders of socialism and their successors, who will be well developed morally, intellectually, physically and aesthetically' (Xi 2018, 1–2; see also 2016a, 376). The four-character saying used here is *lide-shuren* (立德树人), with the senses of strengthening moral education and cultivating people, as well as fostering character and civic virtue (Qi R. 2018).⁹ In this light, Marx's famous eleventh thesis on Feuerbach gains a whole new meaning: 'Marxism has a distinctive practical character, which is not only committed to "explaining the world" scientifically, but is also committed to actively "changing the world"' (Xi 2016c, 5; see also Cai 2018, 9).

1.2.3 *The General Secretary as a Thinker*

A question may linger for some: isn't all this attention to the thought of a political leader a little too much like fawning and obsequiousness, or perhaps propaganda on his behalf? The question is pertinent, since I will deal extensively with the thought of Deng Xiaoping (Chapter 2) and return to Xi Jinping (Chapter 10). On this matter, we encounter a problem to which I will return a little later: one of the roadblocks for those unfortunate enough to have been raised in a Western liberal context is the absence of any serious attention to the thought of political leaders. Even if such a leader has written and published anything of substance—a rare occurrence indeed in the West—such material is of interest to only a few for the sake of what passes as 'political analysis'. Indeed, the task of such analysis is to 'cut through' or 'look behind' the rhetoric that has been carefully crafted by professional 'spin doctors'.¹⁰ It is assumed that such an approach is 'critical' and 'objective', but in doing so of course it becomes an ideological prop of the Western liberal system itself. In light of such assumptions, it should be no surprise that there are in Western contexts very few serious engagements with any communist leader's thought when a Communist Party has been in power.

Those familiar with the communist tradition have a somewhat different perspective. In this case, the thought of the Party's general secretary is crucial, especially works that mark a new step in the development of Marxist theory in light of changing

⁹In this sense should we understand studies that examine the implications of Xi's speech for news services (Xi 2016b; Tong 2016; Lei and Zhang 2018; Zhang and Li 2018) and education, especially ideological and political education (Peng 2018).

¹⁰Thus, a typical version of 'Chinese politics' from such a perspective is to speculate concerning supposed factional struggles within the CPC. This assumption is also based on the deeply entrenched Western assumption that 'politics' means struggle, which we may see—from a Marxist perspective—as arising from the class struggle that is constitutive of capitalist political systems.

circumstances. Of course, to focus on an individual leader may seem a little strange for a tradition that emphasises the collective as the foundation for a fully-rounded individual, let alone the collective role of urban and rural workers. The answer is obvious: the general secretary's work is never an isolated occurrence, but arises from a collective leadership, and especially from periods of intense study and debate. Think of Mao Zedong's study circle in Yan'an in the 1930s, from which the landmark studies on contradiction and practice arose, or the late-night discussions of Deng Xiaoping's comrades as they sought to plot a path for the Reform and Opening-Up. These actions did not take place in a vacuum, for they were part and parcel of intense debates with the Communist Party itself. Fair enough, one might think: we can see the process in the past and study it carefully. But the present? Even 'Western' Marxists balk at such a focus. They are happy to discuss and debate leaders of the past and their legacy, but not the present. They tend to toe the line that careful study of a current general secretary's writings seems a little too obsequious, especially when—according to 'Western' liberal assumptions—one should take a journalistic approach and engage in what passes for 'criticism'. Not so for the communist tradition, in which the thought of current leaders, as well of those of the past, not merely deserves but demands careful study.

It follows from all of this that the Party's general secretary must be a thinker. Some may have spoken and written more and some less than others—Deng Xiaoping, for example, preferred to get down to work rather than write long screeds. It is simply not enough to serve one's time in the political workings of the Party, to rise through the ranks by means of experience and merit. One must also be a thinker, and preferably a thinker of some substance. How then, should their contributions be assessed? In his speech commemorating the 120th anniversary of Mao Zedong's birth, Xi Jinping identified Mao's major contributions to Chinese Marxism and China's socialist road. But he also observed: 'Revolutionary leaders are human beings, not gods ... we cannot worship them like gods or refuse to allow people to point out and correct their errors just because they are great; neither can we totally repudiate them and erase their historical feats just because they made mistakes' (Xi 2013c, 8).

1.3 Chinese Characteristics

The title of this book is 'socialism with Chinese characteristics [*Zhongguo tese*]'. This is the standard term used in China, along with the 'sinification [*zhongguohua*] of Marxism'.¹¹ There is no mystique in such terms, despite efforts in some quarters to espy—with Orientalist assumptions—a deft concealment. Simply put, it means that Marxism has its basic principles and method, but that the method itself needs to take account of the specific historical, economic, and cultural realities of a country.

¹¹ Throughout this book, I translate *zhongguohua* as 'sinification', literally—from Latin—'to make Chinese'. One will often find an alternative translation as 'sinicisation'. The meaning is obviously the same.

Or, as Qi Yiming puts it, the Chinese characteristics entail China's specific practice of Marxism, the era in which China finds itself, and China's culture and history (Qi Y. 2018).

But why not simply call it socialism, rather than adding the 'Chinese characteristics'? History is important: the desire to express this reality dates back to the Zunyi Conference of January 1935. Held at the early stages of the Long March, the expanded conference of the Politburo finally brought to a head simmering tensions between Mao's circle and the Moscow-appointed leadership's¹² effort to impose the model of the Russian Revolution on China. In light of recent military disasters resulting in the need to evacuate the Jiangxi-Fujian Soviet, the former were removed by popular vote and replaced with Mao and other comrades. At last, they were able to enact a revolutionary approach that was sensitive to the specific conditions in China. Not long after this crucial event, Mao began to speak of China's 'own laws of development' and 'its own national characteristics'. In fact, there is 'no such thing as abstract Marxism, but only concrete Marxism [*juti de makesizhuyi*]', by which Mao meant Marxism that is 'applied to the concrete struggle in the concrete conditions [*juti huanjing*] prevailing in China, and not Marxism abstractly used'. Mao urged that the whole Party needed to address the question of 'the sinification of Marxism [*Makesizhuyi zhongguohua*]'—that is to say, making certain that in all its manifestations it is imbued with Chinese characteristics [*Zhongguo de texing*], using it according to Chinese peculiarities [*Zhongguo de tedian*]' (Mao 1938a, 658–659; 1938b, 538–539; see also 1944, 191–192; 1959, 109). Or, as Mao put it somewhat more poetically a few years later: 'The "target" is the Chinese revolution, the "arrow" is Marxism-Leninism' (Mao 1941a, 801; 1941b, 22).

This emphasis on Chinese conditions runs all the way from the strategy of 'using the countryside to surround the cities [*nongcun baowei chengshi*]' to the socialist market economy of the Reform and Opening-Up. Alongside these historical realities are specific philosophical developments in light of dialectical materialism, with which I engage in more detail in Chapter 3. But there is an important consequence of this emphasis on China's specific conditions for the development of socialism. In the same way that the development of a 'China Model' for a proletarian revolution and the subsequent construction of socialism is not dependent on foreign templates or models, so also does China not seek to impose its approach on others. I will have more to say on this question in later chapters, but the fundamental approach of the 'China Model [*Zhongguo moshi*]' is that China will lead by example and urge others to develop approaches suitable to their own conditions (Xu 2010).¹³ But is it really

¹²Especially Qin Bangxian—also known as Bo Gu—and Otto Braun.

¹³As Deng Xiaoping put it: 'The Chinese revolution was not carried out according to the model [*moshi*] of the Russian October Revolution but by proceeding from the realities in China, by using the rural areas to encircle the cities and seize power with armed force. Since the Chinese revolution succeeded by integrating the universal principles of Marxism-Leninism with the concrete practice of China, we should not demand that other developing countries carry out revolution according to the China model [*Zhongguo de moshi*], and even less demand that developed capitalist countries carry out revolution according to the China model [*Zhongguo de moshi*]' (Deng X. 1980, 318; see also 1988, 261).

socialism? Stress too much the specific characteristics and one risks losing touch with the core Marxist principles and methods. Thus, it always needs to be remembered that socialism with Chinese characteristics 'is socialism, and not some other -ism' (Xi 2013a, 22; 2019b, 1).

1.4 Historical Nihilism

It will soon become clear that I do not refer to much secondary literature of a Western provenance. The main reason is that a significant amount of this literature on China leaves much to be desired. To be clear: there are notable exceptions, from whom I have learnt much in my research. These include Domenico Losurdo's insightful Marxist work on China, the wise reflections of Colin Mackerras, the earlier careful studies of Nick Knight, and Barry Sautman's sharp pieces (Losurdo 2012, 2017a, 2017b; Mackerras 2003; Mackerras and Knight 2015; Knight 1990, 2005, 2007; Sautman 1998, 2006, 2010). More limited assistance can be found in a few other works that try at least to take China seriously but do not engage at all with Marxism (Jacques 2009; Bell 2006; Vogel 2011; Guo B. 2018). Beyond such works, one soon descends into what in China is known as 'historical nihilism [*lishi xuwuzhuyi*]', by which is meant the denial of the proletarian revolution, negating the leadership of the CPC, and ignoring Marxism or suggesting that Marxism is outdated and that China has abandoned Marxism (Zheng 2008; Zhu 2016). In a Chinese context, the disaster that befell the Soviet Union is seen as a clear example of the effects of historical nihilism. In that context there was intense ideological struggle, during which the achievements of the October Revolution and the Soviet Communist Party were denied, Lenin and Stalin were belittled, Party organisations at all levels lost their way, and the military was no longer under the leadership of the Party. The result: 'the massive Communist Party of the Soviet Union scattered like birds and beasts [*niaoshousan*]', and the vast socialist state of the Soviet Union collapsed and fell apart [*fenbeng lixi*]' (Xi 2019b, 2). In short, historical nihilism is the favoured tool of those hostile to the communist project, those who seek to vilify and slander China and its path.

I suggest that the various approaches of historical nihilism can best be categorised in terms of sub-genres, some of them with vestiges of the more unsavoury aspects of the Christian tradition that has an abiding influence on Western thought forms.

1.4.1 Typology of Western Genres

Secular apocalypse: this type is also known as the 'China doomer' approach, in which someone seeks to predict yet again the apocalyptic crash of China's economic and political system. One of the earlier works that set the tone was Gordon Chang's *The Coming Collapse of China* (2001), although one can trace such fantasies back

to the establishment of the People's Republic in 1949.¹⁴ If one is fond of recycling this narrative, then it is quite easy to get such a work published in one or another less than reputable press. Every year a new title or more appears proposing a 'collapse' or 'crisis', focusing on whatever aspect takes the author's fancy, but each time recycling the old Judaeo-Christian myth of the apocalyptic end of the world. As this tradition makes clear, the weary repetition of such predictions does not seem to dampen the enthusiasm of those who propagate them.

Dystopian fiction: such works peddle old anti-communist tropes, such as 'cultural genocide' in Tibet, 'forced labour' in Xinjiang, human rights 'abuses' in Hong Kong, 'suppression' of minority nationalities, a 'surveillance state', 'authoritarian dictatorship' that suppresses freedom of the press, and so on and so on. This type of material is known as 'atrocities propaganda',¹⁵ an old anti-communist and indeed anti-anyone-who-does-not-toe-the-Western-line approach that tries to manufacture a certain image for popular consumption. These pieces of 'atrocities propaganda' feed off one another, creating a dystopia that can only be a fiction for anyone who actually spends some time in China, let alone lives there. The only way I can make sense of this type of material is that it belongs to the genre of 'dystopian science fiction', in which another planet is created with a country called 'China'. This fictional representation has nothing to do with the real China here on earth.

Ghost story: this sub-genre postulates that the Communist Party is a secretive and paranoid outfit that is terribly afraid of its own people and seeks world domination. Here too one can be assured of a publication in a less than reputable press if one suggests, for example, that the social credit system is geared to surveillance of a restive population, or that women are indoctrinated to produce the next generation of communists, or indeed that the CPC has a long-term plan to undermine global institutions and take over the world. Much like a ghost story, really, in which one has an irrational belief in ghosts, fits bits and pieces into an apparently coherent narrative of ghostly appearances, and then denies the overwhelming weight of empirical evidence to the contrary. The result: spooks everywhere.

Conspiracy theory: this one is particularly favoured by the relatively few scholars who mostly belong to the small tributary or side-stream known as 'Western Marxism'. The theory relies on an initial 'betrayal'—think of Adam and Eve and the first sin, or Judas Iscariot with Jesus of Nazareth—of Marxism by one or another leader. In a Chinese context, the favoured 'traitor' is Deng Xiaoping, who is cast as a 'capitalist roader'¹⁶ and who supposedly undid all of the socialist achievements of Mao

¹⁴Occasionally, one finds a self-professed 'Marxist' entertaining such views (Li M. 2008, 2016).

¹⁵The term 'atrocities propaganda' was coined by James Read (1976). In our time, the country subject to the most consistent atrocities propaganda is the DPRK, or North Korea (Beal 2005). It should be noted that in the tightly controlled media environment of the UK, the BBC has, since its founding in 1922, been the cultural arm of the UK government's cultural propaganda. In such a role, the BBC has been a prime exponent of atrocities propaganda. Examples include the struggles in Northern Ireland, the invasion of Iraq, the promotion of the 'White Helmets' in Syria, and more recently in relation to Xinjiang in China.

¹⁶Even though Mao never used the term 'capitalist roader [zouzipai]' to speak of Deng Xiaoping, this historical fact has not prevented more than one Western Marxist from making such an assertion.

Zedong. Now the conspiracy theory comes into play: since they believe that China has embarked on a capitalist road since the beginning of the Reform and Opening-Up (Meisner 1996; Weil 1996; Harvey 2005),¹⁷ it follows that all of the many and detailed statements, along with all of the scholarly research projects that are based on empirical data and show that China is actually following a socialist path, must take the form of a massive conspiracy theory with an elaborately coded language.¹⁸ How massive? It has been going for over 40 years and includes the CPC leadership, tens of thousands of scholars, tens of millions of CPC members, and hundreds of millions of Chinese citizens. Quite impressive really, but only if one believes in conspiracy theories.

Orientalist mystery: an old Western and deeply racist trope, the 'orientalist mystery' has many levels. It runs all the way from the notion of 'implacable Asian faces', through the suggestion that people 'disappear' when under police investigation, to the belief that the Communist Party is 'hiding' some horrible truth. In terms of the latter, the possibilities are endless but I am—for the purposes of the present study—particularly interested in the suggestion that the 'truth' of Mao Zedong in terms of what he said and did, of the Cultural Revolution, or Tiananmen Square in 1989, or indeed Xinjiang today, have all been concealed and kept from the public eye. Obviously, this sub-genre is closely connected with 'conspiracy theories', but the 'orientalist mystery' brings to the fore the deeply racist nature of such assumptions. It goes back to the idea of the mystery—both dangerous and sexualised—of the East hidden behind a curtain or veil.

Sectarian intolerance: once again an approach that afflicts Western Marxists, but there are many others who also respond with sectarian or ideologically-inspired intolerance and rejection. I have experienced this response on a number of occasions, when one aspect or another of the research contained in this book has been presented or published. Some listeners and readers simply block it out, suggesting that any effort to present empirical facts—such as the achievements in poverty alleviation, ecological development, promotion of rule of law and human rights, and the nature of China's socialist democracy—is 'partisan'. Indeed, the absurd suggestion that anything that is not a dismissal is 'partisan', along with the passionate denial of the realities of China today, obviously overlaps with some of the other approaches mentioned above. But it also has a distinct air of the sectarian intolerance of Christian

¹⁷One also finds some non-Marxist scholars peddling such a betrayal narrative and its attendant conspiracy theory (Dickson 2003; Huang Y. 2008; Walter and Howie 2011).

¹⁸A good example of such a perceived code is 'crossing the river by feeling for the stones [*mozhe shitou guohe*]', which is recoded to mean crossing 'from the socialist bank to the capitalist bank'. Of course, it means nothing of the sort. The saying was originally used by the Marxist economist, Chen Yun, in order to describe pilot programs that could be tested in one area and then, subject to assessment and revision, be used elsewhere. Chen Yun wrote: 'We should institute reforms slowly and carefully. This is because the reforms we will carry out are complicated, we should not be hasty. Reforms should be based on theoretical research, economic statistics and economic forecasting, but more importantly, we should set out from pilot programs and always sum up experience whenever it is necessary. That is to say, we should "cross the river by feeling for the stones." We should take small steps to advance slowly at the beginning' (Chen Y. 1980, 279).

groups, who are so often given to a ‘zero-sum’ approach to other groups and reject them entirely.

In all of these various sub-genres, one finds not merely a residue of Christian narrative influences—even in Marxist scholars (Losurdo 2008; 2017b)—but also a studied avoidance of Chinese Marxist scholarship. The obvious reason is that if a Western scholar did focus on such research, his or her pet narrative sub-genre would fall apart. But some may ask: is this really fair, offering a caricature of much of Western scholarship on China? What about some who try to present objective, scientific analyses?

1.4.2 *Using Western Categories to Understand China (yixi jiezhong)*

On this matter, we encounter what Chinese researchers call *yixi jiezhong* (以西解中), using Western frameworks or categories in an effort to understand China (Wang H. 2018, 26).¹⁹ By this is meant not so much methods that initially had a Western provenance and have been sinified—Marxism being the most notable—but the assumed framework of Western liberalism and its perspectives on what an economy, state, and society should look like. Within this framework, the assumed categories include: civil society over against the state; politics as an antagonistic struggle between political parties or factions; democracy defined as elections between different political parties; human rights as civil and political rights; the rise and existence of a ‘middle class’ and indeed a working class; and that a ‘market economy’ is by definition a capitalist market economy—as the misleading slogan by Count Ludwig von Mises (1932, 142) would have it, ‘the alternative is still either Socialism or a market economy’. From this framework arises a distortion of language, such as socialist and post-socialist, with 1978 being the turning point; the terminology of ‘conservative’ and ‘reformer’, with ‘conservatives’ being Communists like Deng Xiaoping and ‘reformers’ being the odd liberal; the student unrest of 1989 as a turning point along such ‘conservative-reformer’ lines; and the assumption that human beings everywhere hanker after the illusory ‘freedom and democracy’ of a Western provenance (Goldman and MacFarquhar 1999; Fewsmith 2008; Lampton 2014; Tsang 2014). This whole framework and its usually unquestioned assumptions produces strange works that seek to analyse China as an emerging capitalist market economy, with a rising middle class that would demand its liberal ‘freedom and democracy’ were it not for a repressive Communist Party that is ‘conservative’ to the core. It certainly leads to circular research ‘results’. A good example is the search for ‘evidence’ of ‘democracy’, focusing on grassroots democratic practices. Since the whole perspective for what counts as ‘democracy’ is the rather thin Western liberal notion, they typically fail to find ‘evidence’ and so must conclude that such an absence is due to an ‘authoritarian’ political structure

¹⁹On occasion, it is also known as ‘*yixi shizhong* [以西释中]’, ‘using the West to explain China’ (Qiao 2014).

that 'represses' such 'democracy'. You cannot find what is not there, especially when you ignore the reality of a relatively mature socialist democracy (see Chapters 8 and 9).

Why do these perspectives remain influential in Western efforts to misrepresent China? After all, what counts as the 'West' is a relatively few countries—perhaps 12–15—that comprise only 14 percent of the global population. A major reason can be found in the fact that all of them are former colonisers and have through such colonial endeavours been able to assert a dominant discourse that arises from Western liberalism. Of course, this is a somewhat aberrant perspective in the world. As Igor Diakonoff was fond of pointing out, the historical development of the western peninsula of the Eurasian landmass is quite unlike other parts of the world and should certainly not be seen as a model (Diakonoff 2003, 157). For Chinese scholars, those who peddle Western perspectives and models fall into the trap of *yixi jiezhong*, seeking the understand China with Western eyes. To be sure, there are a few who seek to challenge such a framework in various ways, arguing that Western frameworks will always lead to mistakes when trying to understand China (Bell 2006; Jacques 2009; Guo B. 2018).²⁰ Agreed, but they tend to do so through a culturalist approach that posits an inherent cultural difference.

Let us go a step further and focus for a moment on Western Marxist scholars, some of whom I have already mentioned. In this case, Chinese scholars speak of *yixi jiema* (以西解马), using Western categories to understand Marx (Ren and Wang 2010, 104; Ren 2017, 67). Isn't this a step too far, since Marx was after all a German and thus a Western scholar and communist? The point is pertinent, since there seems to be an almost constitutive inability within Western Marxism to understand socialism with Chinese characteristics. Having spent more time I should have done in the various lanes and alleys of Western Marxism, I have found that a number of factors play a role. We have already met the liking for 'betrayal narratives', with many potential candidates all the way from Engels to Deng Xiaoping, as well as the inherent deployment of 'orientalist mystery'. But here I should also mention a 'holier than though' attitude to many parts of the world deemed 'inferior' and not living up to a supposed Western standard—an attitude that reveals Western Marxism's 'tailism' to Western imperialism and colonialism;²¹ the deforming effect of utopian messianism, in which the possibility of socialism, let alone communism, becomes a hoped-for dream and is used as the basis for condemning actual proletarian revolutions and efforts to construct socialism (Losurdo 2008; 2017b); a reductionism that sees class struggle only in terms of bourgeoisie and proletariat, and thus fails to see that Marx and

²⁰Chinese scholars tell me that even Daniel Bell and Martin Jacques—whose work is reasonably well-known—ultimately use a Western framework in their studies.

²¹Lenin deployed the term 'tailism' when he had to deal with those who argued that a Communist Party should not take the lead in any revolutionary activity but should 'tail behind'. A succinct expression of this Western attitude is from Terry Eagleton's late effort to reassert his Marxist credentials: 'Marx himself never imagined that socialism could be achieved in impoverished conditions. Such a project would require almost as bizarre a loop in time as inventing the Internet in the Middle Ages' (Eagleton 2011, 16).

Engels also included anti-colonial struggles for liberation, as well as the struggle for women's liberation, within the complexity of class struggle (Losurdo 2013, 2016); a capitulation to the dominance of 'centrist liberalism' (Wallerstein 2011), where Marxism becomes a 'liberal Marxism' that retreats to defending bourgeois parliamentary democracy as a means for accelerated reform (Engels already struggled with such a tendency in the 1890s); and an overwhelming tendency to focus on the period 'before October', before a proletarian revolution and to dismiss any development that has come after a successful revolution, all the way from Russia to China. The outcome is an approach that is empirically false, for it does not 'seek truth from facts' as one should when using a Marxist method, and methodologically highly problematic, as the observations above concerning betrayal narratives and conspiracy theories indicate. Constitutive failure to understand Chinese Marxism—the reasons should be obvious by now.²² Indeed, many efforts to use Western Marxist assumptions to understand socialism with Chinese characteristics are not merely a cases of *yixi jiema* (using Western categories to understand Marx), but also *shiyang buhua* (食洋不化), eating foreign food without digesting it (Ren 2017, 67).²³

1.5 Method

In light of all of the above, what is the method I use in this book?

Simply put, the method entails a careful reading of texts, both the primary (from Mao Zedong to Xi Jinping) and secondary works of Chinese Marxism in relation to socialism with Chinese characteristics. As is my wont, the references to such works are heavy in the work that follows. But I have found it necessary to provide such copious references so as to indicate how thorough this scholarship is, how it is based on in-depth empirical research, how much it has thought through the many problems faced in the construction of socialism in China, and how it provides the major way to understanding socialism with Chinese characteristics.

To get to such a point required much work. I began with a need to dismantle most of the assumptions I had gathered in my indoctrination into Western liberalism, which I imbibed almost from my first breaths and soaked in through formal education and cultural assumptions. This process was by no means easy, producing many moments

²²One may ask: what about the 'Maoist Leftists [*maozuol*]' or 'Maoist sectarians [*maopai*]' in China? This a very small group who have adopted Western betrayal narratives and conspiracy theories in relation to Deng Xiaoping and the Reform and Opening-Up, and who in China are regarded as following a 'Left Deviation [*zuopai pianxiang*]' that attempts to pander to Western Marxist proclivities. An example is Jiang Hongsheng's doctoral thesis on the Shanghai Commune of 1967 and the way an octogenarian Western Maoist like Alain Badiou, who has never been to China, has promoted such a work (Jiang H. 2014; Badiou 2018).

²³Or, as Ernst Bloch observed in a different context but with pertinence for today: 'Whereby such large sections of bourgeois erudition, without any concrete knowledge-relationship to the present, either confronted this latter epoch helplessly when it demanded decision, or, in recent times, sold themselves to anti-Bolshevism, over and above all class interests, with scandalous ignorance and lack of wisdom' (Bloch 1985, 331; 1995, 284).

of deconstruction and reconstruction, many 'aha' moments. It also entailed a removal of the assumptions of Western Marxism, where I had dwelt for too long (since my youth). This process began with my work on Lenin and especially Stalin (Boer 2013, 2017), during which I encountered a crucial distinction between 'before October' and 'after October'. The reference is, of course, to the October Revolution of 1917 in Russia, the first proletarian revolution in human history, which was able to seize and consolidate power by successfully seeing off the counter-revolution. The distinction itself became clear to me at a conference on Lenin, held in Wuhan in 2012. Half of the delegates were non-Chinese and mostly Western, and half of the delegates were Chinese. Soon enough, a difference in focus began to emerge: the Western delegates were primarily interested in the Lenin before October, before the revolution; the Chinese delegates were interested in the Lenin after October, when he began to deal with the early problems of socialist construction. Obviously, the contexts of the delegates influenced their perspectives, with the Western delegates coming from situations of seeking a revolutionary seizure of power, and the Chinese delegates from a situation where Communist power was well and truly secured. But it was more than that: it struck me that nearly everything changes when a Communist Party has gained power. Planning for and pulling off a successful revolution is the relatively easy part; setting out to construct socialism is exponentially more difficult and complicated. This is the overwhelming perspective of Chinese Marxism.

What remains after one has—as far as possible—dismantled unhelpful assumptions and frameworks of analysis, when one has 'washed' one's brain as Mao Zedong put it, or 'liberated thought' as Deng Xiaoping urged? The answer: a focus on the texts in question. Here I fall back to my most basic training in classical languages and textual analysis.²⁴ At this level, I have found an intersection with the Chinese concern with written texts, which go back more than 3000 years. But this method entails that one must study such texts in the languages in which they were written and passed down through the tradition. In light of this earlier training and its intersection with Chinese approaches, I have long maintained the absolute necessity of studying a distinct development of Marxism in the language in which it was written: primarily German and French for Marx and Engels, Russian for Lenin and Stalin, and of course Chinese for socialism with Chinese characteristics. Some people may pick up languages more quickly; not me. It requires disciplined daily work. Despite Mao Zedong's famous quip that 'the whole world must learn Chinese [*quan shijie bixu xuexi zhongwen*]', I have found the process of learning the Chinese language both arduous and rewarding. They say it takes about ten years of daily study and practice to become fluent. I can read and write very well, and my oral-aural skills draw ever closer to the point of fluency. Thus, the reader will find frequent references to Chinese terms and efforts to explain what they mean. I have read deeply in the Chinese texts of Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping, and Xi Jinping, and also of Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao. I have also—as the references should show—read very many works of Chinese Marxist scholarship. There are so many, in fact, that I have had to

²⁴These languages include Greek, Latin, and Hebrew, all of which I have taught in the past, along with a number of others for research purposes, such as Syriac, Aramaic, Coptic, and Sanskrit.