

## **A Translation of Marxist Voices in Chinese History**

**Austin Zheng, Class of 2026**

The purpose of this project is to help overcome the dearth of translated Chinese primary sources in the history of Chinese communism. Despite China becoming one of the largest Communist countries, translated information of its history available to Western historiography remains limited. For example, the Marxist Internet Archive, one of the largest online archives for Marxist-related texts, hosts hundreds of Chinese texts,<sup>1</sup> but few are available in English.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, most translated sources are written by prominent party leaders or famous theorists, leaving out the countless voices of ordinary party members who participated in the revolution. Therefore, this project aims to focus on primary sources from members that are not easily found in Western historiography.

I focused my search on Shanghai, the birthplace of the Chinese Communist Party in 1921. I visited the Shanghai Municipal Archive and local libraries to discover what materials were available. These materials included newspaper records, memoirs and autobiographies, government documents, and party records. Unfortunately, there were often restrictions to archives depending on the visitor's nationality and public availability. Libraries were less restrictive so long as the sources remained within their reading rooms. I focused on translating primary sources that were most interesting to me, often choosing the stories of people I had not heard of before. During this process, I developed thematic ideas and summaries that furthered my understanding of how different members in the Chinese Communist party viewed their historical situation.

For example, I was surprised by the strong conviction of rank-and-file party members in the Communist vision. Zeng Zhi joined the Chinese Communist Party at the age of fifteen. Two years later, Zeng Zhi lost her husband when the Chinese Communists and Nationalists cooperated in the First United Front to successfully retake Shanghai from warlord control. Yet, despite her personal loss, the cooperation yielded few results, as the Chinese Communist Party was nearly destroyed a month later by the Nationalists during the Shanghai Massacre. However, Zeng Zhi continued to believe in the revolution, giving up care of her first son to a friend while she remained with the main force of the Fourth Red Army as they fled further south. While her membership in the Communist Party was turbulent, it was fascinating to read about her genuine belief in the Communist vision and explanations for her sacrifices.

**Faculty Mentor: Salar Mohandesi**

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<sup>1</sup> "Authors from Members of the Chinese Party." Marxists Internet Archive. Accessed June 4, 2024. <https://www.marxists.org/chinese/pdf/others.htm>.

<sup>2</sup> "Important Writings in the History and Development of Chinese Communism." Marxists Internet Archive. Accessed June 4, 2024. <https://www.marxists.org/subject/china/documents/index.htm>.