

International Conference

**“From Hu-Wen to Xi-Li Administration:
China’s Leadership Transition and Its Domestic and International Implications”**

jointly organized by



**Institute of China Studies
UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA**

and



12-13 September 2013

**Venue: Auditorium, Research Management and Innovation Complex,
University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia**

**Is It All Too Bad to Return to Marx? Marxism and Reformism
at the Central Compilation and Translation Bureau
from Hu Jintao to Xi Jinping**

Dr Ngeow Chow Bing, Senior Lecturer,
Institute of China Studies, University of Malaya, Malaysia.

Is It All Too Bad to Return to Marx? Marxism and Reformism at the Central Compilation and Translation Bureau from Hu Jintao to Xi Jinping

Author

Dr. Ngeow Chow Bing, Senior Lecturer, Institute of China Studies, University of Malaya

Abstract

The Central Compilation and Translation Bureau (CCTB), a central organ of the Chinese Communist Party, has not been studied much by scholars inside or outside of China. Originally an authoritative translation house for classical Marxist works, in recent years CCTB has gained more prominence as a think tank. Among its leaders are well-known advocates for political reforms and democracy. This article presents an analytical history of CCTB. It will discuss how did CCTB evolve, what factors played the major role in its evolution, and how does it reconcile its seemingly contradictory roles of being a Marxist translation house and a pro-reform think tank.

Keywords: Central Compilation and Translation Bureau, Think Tank, Chinese Communist Party, Intellectuals, Yu Keping

In a *New York Times* article that profiles Dr. Yu Keping, the Chinese scholar who penned the essay “Democracy is a good thing” years ago, the institution in which Yu works at, the Central Compilation and Translation Bureau (CCTB hereafter), is described as an “obscure agency dedicated to translating works by Chinese leaders and Marxist tracts.”¹ More recently, in December 2012, CCTB was put on the media spotlight for an unfortunate reason: its director was engulfed in a sex scandal. This episode raised strong criticisms of CCTB among the party’s critics, who see it as a parasite wasting public resources, “a workshop for the party’s ideological production.”²

¹ Andrew Jacobs, ‘A Chinese Official Praises a Taboo: Democracy,’ *New York Times*, July 24, 2010. 5.

² 何清涟 [He, Qinglian], “‘Bianyiju yanqinglu’ cuihui Beijing de lilunzixin [“CCTB’s love story” destorys Beijing’s theoretical self-confidence], 2012, available at <http://heqinglian.net/2012/12/14/china-sex-scandal/> (accessed August 28, 2013).

However, there is also another image of CCTB, an image that is far more positive. It has the reputation of being one of the most cosmopolitan and reformist think tanks in China. It translates works of Marx and Engels, but it does more than that. It is a major theoretical and policy research organization in China. And being one of the premier institutions devoted to the research of Marxism in China, it is however not particularly ideologically conservative. At times, new and innovative ideas of political and economic reforms emerged from within it as well. Many foreign scholars and organizations, including the Ford Foundation, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, and the Carter center, have worked with it before. In the words of a more appreciative western observer, CCTB is “part university, part think tank, part ‘McKinsey’ for government reform.”³ Another one calls it “a hothouse of innovation for the ruling party.”⁴

In recent years, there was an increased attention to the role of think tanks in China, as witnessed by the case studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, the Central Party School, economics think tanks and various international relations/foreign policy think tanks. However, not much is known about CCTB. This article aims to redeem this lack of understanding of CCTB. The central question this article asks is: Why and how does a Marxist translation agency become a significant organization for transmitting, introducing and developing western and reformist ideas, and how does it reconcile the two roles? The main thesis in which this article will make is that as the party’s central organ devoted to the translation of Marxist works, CCTB is inherently and bound up to play significant research role when the party has to enter into serious ideological debates with fellow Marxist parties, make drastic policy changes, or justify introducing seemingly un-Marxist economic or political ideas. Two consequence follow: First, CCTB has to be well-immersed in the original Marxist writings as well as the writings of the so-called revisionists. This unexpectedly exposed to them the various Marxist criticisms of the Stalinist model that the People’s

³ Mark Leonard, *What Does China Think* (New York: Public Affairs, 2008), 54.

⁴ William Dobson, *The Dictator’s Learning Curve* (New York: Random House, 2012), 267.

Republic was modelled after, and this allows them to appreciate the meaning of “going back to the original Marx.” Second, CCTB also has to be a theoretically sophisticated and cosmopolitan organization: it has to be comfortable engaging with western scholars to play its role, and from here, it becomes a key institution to introduce fresh ideas in the political and ideological scene in China.

The author undertook a field trip to CCTB in August 2012 and conducted interviews with CCTB scholars and officials, participated in the academic activities organized by CCTB, and used the resources in the CCTB library. The main sources of this article come from these interviews, CCTB’s internal publications, and memoirs or biographies of retired CCTB staff.

The Beginning of the Translation House

CCTB’s origins can be traced back to several places: the Translation Department at Yan’an in the early 1940s, the Russian Translation Group in Harbin during the Civil War (1946-1949) period, and the Russian Compilation and Translation Bureau in Beijing in 1949.

Translation Department at Yan’an

CCTB and the Central Party School share a common lineage in the Marx-Lenin College in Yan’an. Established on May 5, 1938 and headed by Zhang Wentian, the College had two departments: a cadre-training department and a translation department. Zhang also headed the translation department concurrently. The staff included Wang Shiwei and Chen Boda.⁵ It was Yan’an’s first specialized agency under the leadership of the party devoted to

⁵ 中共中央编译局编 [Central Compilation and Translation Bureau], comp, 马克思恩格斯著作在中国的传播 [The Diffusion of the Works of Marx and Engels in China] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1982), 298; 张积玉, 王钺春 [Zhang Jiyu, Wang Juchun], 马克思主义理论家翻译家张仲实 [Marxist Theoretician and Translator Zhang Zhongshi] (Xi’an: Shaanxi renmin jiaoyu chubanshe, 1991), 177; 温济泽等 [Wen Jize et al.] 王实味冤案平反纪实 [Records of the Rehabilitation of Wang Shiwei] (Beijing: Qunzhong chubanshe, 1993), 3.

translating works of Marx, Engels, and Lenin.⁶ From 1938 to 1942, the Liberation Press (*Jiefang chubanshe*) in Yan'an published numerous Marxist works, including *The Communist Manifesto*, *Civil War in France*, *Revolution and Counterrevolution in Germany*, and *Selected Correspondence of Marx and Engels*. Not all translations of these books came from the translation department. Some of them were translated in the 1920s and early 1930s, and now only went through an editing process to be republished, while some others came from the foreign publishing house in Moscow.⁷ On the other hand, the translation of the military writings of Marx and Engels appeared to be exclusively performed by another agency, a translation section of the party's military committee (*junwei bianyichu*).⁸

In 1941, the Marx-Lenin College was reorganized into first, a Marx-Lenin Institute, and later, the Central Research Institute (*zhongyang yanjiuyuan*). It was at this Institute that the Rectification movement began. The translation department seemed to be also affected by the movement. Apparently, Mao and other party's leaders were not quite satisfied with the performance of the translation department. Mao also suggested an enlargement of the translation department.⁹ In a directive issued on May 27, 1943, the Party Center sharply criticized the quality of translation done in Yan'an. In the directive, the Party center decided to create a new Committee on Translation and Editing, the members of which included Zhang Wentian, Yang Shangkun and Shi Zhe.¹⁰ Nevertheless, the Committee never materialized, while the translation department seemed to have ended its operation since the Rectification Movement. There was a Russian department under the reorganized Central Research Institute,

⁶ 邓力群 [Wu Jiemin], '我对延安马列学院的回忆与看法,' [My reminiscences and view of Yan'an Marx-Lenin College,] in *延安马列学院回忆录* [*Reminiscences of Yan'an Marx-Lenin College*], edited by 吴介民 [Wu Jiemin] (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1991), 14.

⁷ One of the people working in the foreign language publishing house in Moscow at that time was Chen Changhao, who later became a CCTB's leader. See CCTB, *Diffusion of the Works of Marx and Engels*, 325.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 140, 302-304.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 306.

¹⁰ '中共中央关于一九四三年翻译工作的决定,' [Party center's decision on translation work in 1943], in *建党以来重要文献选编 (一九二一—一九四九)*, 第二十册 [*Compilation of Important Documents Since the Founding of the Party (1921-1949)*, Vol. 20], edited by 中央文献研究室 [Central Documents Research Office] (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 2011), 328.

but that could serve the purpose of teaching Russian, and not translation only. Translation of Marxist works continued, but was done by individual translators working in other organs of the Party.

Russian Translation Small Group

The Russian Translation Small Group (*Ewen bianyi xiaozu*) was an agency established and attached to the Northeast Bureau of the Party. It was established in and headed by Li Lisan and his Russian wife Lisha in 1947. Li Lisan, apart from being a party leader, had a long pedigree as a distinguished translator; during his time at Soviet Russia he has helped translate Marx's writings and other Russian works into Chinese. The Group was established out of the necessity of translating and publicizing important policies by the Chinese Communist Party in the Northeast region, where interactions with Soviet Russia were extensive in the post-war years. Some of the most important Party's documents, such as the *Basic Land Law of China (Zhongguo tudifa dagang)* and Mao's "The Present Situation and Our Tasks" were first translated into Russian by this agency. The first Russian edition of the *Selected Works of Mao Zedong* was also produced by this small group.¹¹ This small group would later serve as a basis for the formation of the Russian Compilation and Translation Bureau (RCTB), the direct predecessor of CCTB. Li Lishan and Lisa, though not members of RCTB/CCTB, would continue to have close relationship with the latter, acting at times as its advisors.¹²

Russian Compilation and Translation Bureau

¹¹ This was the earlier edition of Mao's *Selected Works*, not the authoritative editions compiled in the post-1949 period.

¹² 李莎[Lisha], 我的中国缘分: 李立三夫人李莎回忆录 [*My China Fate: Memoir of Lisha, Wife of Li Lisan*] (Beijing: Waiyu jiaoxue yu yanjiu chubanshe, 2009), 176; 唐纯良 [Tang Chunliang], 李立三全传 [*A Complete Biography of Li Lisan*] (Hefei: Anhui renmin chubanshe, 1999), 230-231; 李思慎 [Li Sishen], 李立三红色传奇 [*The Red Legend of Li Lisan*] (Beijing: Zhongguo gongren chubanshe, 2004), 467-468.

Organizationally speaking, the direct predecessor of CCTB was the central RCTB (*Zhongyang Ewen bianjiyu*), established in June of 1949 and headed by Shi Zhe. On May 21, 1949, the Party Center issued the “Decision to establish translation organs.”¹³ In this long directive, the Party center stressed the importance of recruiting and organizing Chinese Russian speakers into an organ under the supervision of the Central Committee and the Military Committee. Such recruitment efforts were to take place in the whole country, especially in Northeast region. Especially notable was group of journalists who used to work for the *Honesty Press* (Shihuabao), a newspaper sponsored by the Soviet Army in the Northeast that mainly circulated between 1946 and 1951.¹⁴ The Central Propaganda Department was also asked to create a translation house that focuses on multiple major foreign languages. In addition, specialized Russian schools were to open up in major cities. The stress on Russian language, of course, reflected the “leans toward the Soviet Union” strategy of the early years of the People’s Republic. The problem of the lack of Russian-speaking Chinese was especially acute in the light of the large number of Soviet experts dispatched to help China in the coming years.¹⁵

RCTB henceforth was established to tackle the necessity of centralizing and organizing the efforts to translate large number of Russian writings and to train capable translators for years to come.¹⁶ RCTB was later to merge with the Translation Office for the Collected Works of Stalin, which was established under the Central Propaganda Department and devoted exclusively to translating Stalin’s *Collected Works*. This Translation Office was

¹³ ‘中共中央关于成立外文翻译机构的决定,’ [Party center’s decision to establish translation organs] in 建党以来重要文献选编 (一九二一—一九四九), 第二十六册 [*Compilation of Important Documents Since the Founding of the Party (1921-1949), Vol. 26*], edited by 中央文献研究室 [Central Documents Research Office] (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 2011), 412-414.

¹⁴ See 大连市史志办公室编 [Historical Gazette Office of the City of Dalian], comp, 大连实话报史料集 [*Materials on the History of Honesty Press in Dalian*] (Dalian: Dalian chubanshe, 2003), 448-449, 471, 510, 566, 567.

¹⁵ 沈志华 [Shen Zhihua], 苏联专家在中国 (1948-1960) [*Soviet Experts in China*] (Beijing: Xinhua chubanshe, 2009), 108.

¹⁶ 师哲 [Shi Zhe], 我的一生——师哲自述 [*My Life –Shi Zhe Recollects*] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2001), 388.

headed by Jiang Chunfang. On January 29, 1953, the central leadership decided to combine the two units, into a new Compilation and Translation Bureau for the Works of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin (shorthanded as Central Compilation and Translation Bureau). Shi Zhe continued his directorship, but as a personal interpreter for many central leaders (including Mao), he was not at CCTB most of the time. He was aided by three deputies: Chen Changhao, Jiang Chunfang, and Zhang Zhongshi (who joined in 1955), who assumed more responsibilities for daily administration.

Central Compilation and Translation Bureau

After the merger, the chief mission of CCTB was the translation of the *Collected Works of Marx and Engels* (CWEM hereafter), *Collected Works of Lenin* (CWL), and *Collected Works of Stalin* (CWS). The three sets constituted what were considered the most important Marxist works, politically and ideologically, in China at that time. Due to the political implications of the writings of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin, CCTB was (and still is) the exclusive organ that is authorized to translate their writings. Although it also relies on many external helps, the final version has to come from CCTB. The only non-CCTB translations allowed are those that were translated years before CCTB was created, in the 1920s and 1930s, by an early generation of Marxist scholars and translators. Their editions could be concurrently issued and published with the CCTB's editions.¹⁷ CCTB started first with CWS. In September 1953, the first volume of the eventual 13-volume CWS was published, and the full set was complete in 1958. In 1955, the first volume of CWL (39 volumes) was published, and the whole set was complete in 1963. CWME took the longest

¹⁷ 顾锦屏, 陈聪 [Gu Jinping & Chen Cong], ‘马克思主义经典著作编译工作 60 年,’ [60 Years of compilation and translation of classical Marxist works], in 马克思主义在中国 60 年 [60 Years of Marxism in China], edited by 俞可平, 王伟光, 李慎明 [Yu Keping, Wang Weiguang & Li Shenming] (Chongqing: Chongqing chubanshe, 2010), 37; 人民出版社马列著作编辑室编 [Editorial Office of Marxist-Leninist Writings at the People's Publisher], comp., 马克思恩格斯列宁斯大林著作中文本书目, 版本, 简介 [Chinese Editions of the Works of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin: Bibliography, Editions, Introduction] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1983).

time. The first volume was issued in December 1956, and the last volume (volume 50) was published in 1985. Reportedly more than 300 people had worked on the “three sets.”¹⁸

However, most of the CCTB’s staff members recruited in the 1950s was not necessarily well immersed in Marxist theory. Russian (and some other foreign languages, such as German and English) may be their strength, but Marxism was not. In addition, annotations of the Marxist works also required the translators to have understanding of the historical, political, and economic contexts of the writing of such works. This proved to be a challenge, and various courses on Marxism and other subjects had to be organized for the staff. Hence, from the very beginning CCTB stressed learning and research, in addition to translation. It was as much an academic organ as a bureaucratic organ. “Translation is grounded in research” and “Combining translation and research into one” served as guiding principles in the early years of CCTB.¹⁹ As early as 1955, a separate research office was established. Of course, the “research” here would mean only basic learning of Marxism and other subjects; the purpose of which was to elevate the quality of the translation. But there was already a consideration for nurturing theoretical researchers, given that CCTB had significant corpus of Marxist works and that its mission –the spread of Marxism in China, could well be an important research subject as well. The research office hence was divided into two sections: a section that focused on international communist movement, and the other on Chinese revolutionary history.²⁰ In the later years, the foundation laid in this little-noticed research office would play a more unexpected and significant role.

¹⁸ CCTB, *Diffusion*, 188.

¹⁹ 中共中央编译局编 [Central Compilation and Translation Bureau], comp. 中共中央编译局成立四十周年纪念册 (1953-1993) [*Commemorative Volume on the 40th Anniversary of the Central Compilation and Translation Bureau 1953-1993*] (Beijing: Zhongyang bianyiju, 1993?), 28, 31; CCTB, *Diffusion*, 187.

²⁰ 顾锦屏 [Gu Jinping], ‘丁守和与中央编译局,’ [Ding Shouhe and Central Compilation and Translation Bureau], in 五四精神的守护者——丁守和先生纪念集 [*Guardian of the May Fourth Spirit: Essays in Memory of Ding Shouhe*], edited by 耿云志, 左玉河 [Geng Yunzhi & Zuo Yuhe] (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2009), 129.

In addition to translating Marxist canons, key leaders of CCTB also served as personal interpreters for central leaders (Shi Zhe for Mao and Zhou; Jiang for Song Qingling). CCTB also provided oral translation during major party congresses, such as the Eighth Party Congress in 1956.²¹ CCTB was also the counterpart organization to similar Marxist institutes within the Soviet bloc. CCTB developed particular close relationship with the Institute of Marxism-Leninism of the Soviet Union, from which it collected a large number of precious primary materials, including entire sets of *Iskra* and *Pravda*.²² In the years of Sino-Soviet friendship, CCTB hosted several major Soviet scholars. From 1953 to 1955, CCTB inherited several Russian expatriates from RCTB. Most of them were previously journalists at the *Honesty Press*, they were not academicians per se, but were fluent in both Russian and Chinese languages.²³ The first Russian academician CCTB hosted came from the Institute of Marxism-Leninism, S. I. Smirnov. He would oversee the theoretical sphere. He also played an important role in helping CCTB to acquire research materials. By 1954, China actually still did not have full and complete sets of the *Collected Works* of Marx and other authors (Moscow version, of course), and CCTB was the first institution in China to acquire them and many other materials, making the library of CCTB one of the best collections on Marxism in China. Beginning in 1955, other Soviet scholars who were invited to work at CCTB included historian A. M. Pankratova, Lenin specialist N. I. Krutikova, economist J. Turcins, and philosopher E. P. Kandel.²⁴

In April of 1962, CCTB took over from the Central Liaison Department a department that translated works of Chinese leaders and Chinese documents into foreign languages. The

²¹ CCTB, *40th Anniversary*, 78-80.

²² 顾锦屏 [Gu Jinping], ‘姜春芳与编译局,’ [Jiang Chunfang and the Translation Bureau], in 姜春芳纪念文集 [Essays in Memory of Jiang Chunfang], edited by 姚以恩, 姜妮娜, 姜抗生 [Yao Yien, Jiang Nina & Jiang Kangsheng] (Beijing: Zhongguo dabaikewanshu chubanshe, 2008), 127; 杨哲, 宋敏 [Yang Zhe & Song Min], 中国现代百科全书奠基人: 姜春芳传 [Founder of the Modern Encyclopedia of China: A Biography of Jiang Chunfang] (Beijing: Zhongguo wenlian chubanshe, 2007), 180.

²³ Historical Gazette Office of the City of Dalian, *History of Honesty Press*, 448, 553, 556.

²⁴ CCTB, *40th Anniversary*, 73-74, 96.

department was originally designed as a Mao's Works Translation Office, established in 1960. The translation of Mao's writings into Russian, and Stalin's writings into Chinese, was an agreement reached during Mao's visit to Russia in 1949-1950.²⁵ Shi Zhe was given the task to translate Mao's writings, and he was aided by sinologist N. T. Fedorenko. The first two volumes of *Selected Works of Mao* were translated and published in Russia in the 1950s by Shi and Fedorenko, whereas the third volume was translated by Soviet sinologists but proofread by Shi and Fedorenko. Soviet philosopher Pavel F. Yudin also took part; he came to China in 1950 to take a special look at Mao's *On Practice*.²⁶ In 1960, the fourth volume of Mao's *Selected Works* was published. The Party center decided that it should be translated and published in foreign languages as soon as possible. The Mao's Works Translation Office was hence established in May 1960, first as an ad hoc group, later to be housed under the Central Liaison Department, and in 1962, to be transferred to CCTB. From 1960 to 1964, English, Russian, Spanish, and French editions of Volume 4 of Mao's *Selected Works* were published. By 1960 China's relationship with Russia had deteriorated and Russian experts at CCTB had been recalled. Hence, CCTB worked on the Russian edition without Soviet experts. The office was to assume a more permanent role, and later also took up the task to translate works by other leaders such as Liu Shaoqi and Zhou Enlai.²⁷

Sino-Soviet Split, Cultural Revolution, and the Central Compilation and Translation Bureau

The Sino-Soviet debate reflected profound ideological differences over the interpretation of Marxism. It would profoundly influence the nature and functions of CCTB. CCTB, of course, was the organ that translated much of the Chinese "commentaries" into foreign languages during the big debate between the Chinese communists and the Soviets.

²⁵ Yang and Song, *Jiang Chunfang*, 202-203; Shi, *My Life*, 346, 365-367.

²⁶ Ibid, p. 366; 中共中央编译局编 [Central Compilation and Translation Bureau], comp, 传播真理, 奋斗不息——中共中央编译局成立 50 周年纪念文集 (1953-2003) [*Spread the Truth, Work Hard Incessantly: Commemorative Essays on the 50th Anniversary of the Central Compilation and Translation Bureau (1953-2003)*] (Beijing: Zhonggong zhongyang bianyiju, 2003?), 249.

²⁷ Ibid, 241-242, 663.

Staff members of the aforementioned department that translates Mao's writings into foreign languages were all mobilized and stationed in the special office at the party center for translating the documents of the debate.²⁸ But more importantly, by virtue of its accessibility to numerous foreign language materials, dedication to accurate translation of the Marxist canons, and close interaction with Marxist academics and academic institutions in the Soviet camp, CCTB would become the one of the most useful resource bases for the Party center during the debate.

International Communist Movement Historical Materials Office

In December 1960, CCTB established an International Communist Movement Historical Materials Office. This office was originally one of the two sections of the 1955 research office that dealt with materials relating to international communist movement. Initially organized into three sections, the main mission of this office was to collect, organize and provide materials on all "old and new revisionists and opportunists" of the First, Second, and Third Internationals that would be useful for the Party center in their ideological debates with the "revisionist" Russians and their allies, to trace and translate important theoretical writings in the current Soviet periodicals, and to translate Russian letters addressed to Mao. It would also undertake assignments handed out by the Party center.²⁹ Because CCTB had earlier obtained a full set of *Pravda*, in addition to the fullest collection of Marxist works in China, it was highly relied by the Party center to trace and translate particular speech or piece of writings. It was also under this context that the staff members at this office translated and published large numbers of so-called "grey books." The grey books were compilations of L. Trotsky, N. Bukharin, K. Kautsky, E. Bernstein, F. Lassalle, O. Bauer, and other so-called "old revisionists" (notwithstanding the wide differences between them; all of them were

²⁸ CCTB, *40th Anniversary*, 12.

²⁹ CCTB, *40th Anniversary*, 4, 13-14.

lumped together as revisionists). Due to the closely-followed Stalinist orthodoxy in China, these writers had long been banished. But now their writings for the first time were systematically collected, translated, and published in communist China, ironically for the purpose to criticize Soviet Russia. Due to the lack of available materials, CCTB staff had to flip through pages of *Pravda* to dig out the articles written by these “old revisionists.”³⁰ CCTB staff member hence unexpectedly became the true experts on them in China, while the grey books became essential materials for anyone in China wishing to do studies in international communist movement. During the great debate, Beijing’s central writing team would rely a lot on the “grey books” for writing their theses against the Soviets. Among the “nine commentaries,” the fifth and ninth commentary would not be possible without the “grey books” compiled by CCTB. In fact, the original title of the ninth commentary was “From Bernstein, Kautsky to Khrushchev.”³¹

The origin of CCTB as a think tank could be traced to its role in this debate. This was the first time that CCTB acted as some kind of consultancy for party leaders. On the other hand, this episode would also shape the nature of CCTB profoundly in later years. When these staff members of the research office were compiling the “revisionist” writings, they were exposed to these writers who are genuinely Marxist, yet critical of the Leninist-Stalinist (especially Stalinist) orthodoxy. During that time, they of course would be critical and dismissive of these writers as well, but after the end of the Cultural Revolution, their work at this office would lay the groundwork for more objective studies of these writers in the post-Mao years. By then, the staff members had become authoritative scholars in this area of research. For example, it was from CCTB that writers such as Rosa Luxemburg, Bukharin and

³⁰ CCTB, *50th Anniversary*, 361-362

³¹ 崔奇[Cui Qi], 我所亲历的中苏大论战 [*The Sino-Soviet Great Debate that I Experienced*] (Beijing: Renminribo chubanshe, 2009), 212, 234.

even Trotsky first re-assessed.³² When there was a post-Mao “renaissance” in the Western Marxist tradition and in “the original texts of Marx and Engels,”³³ there is no doubt that CCTB made much contribution in making their writings available in Chinese. It also formed a style of scholarship at CCTB that emphasizes the use of solid historical materials in the original language. More importantly, it instigated in CCTB a kind of Marxism that was much more open-ended that would allow for the variety of ways of interpreting the original Marx or Lenin. It would make CCTB’s treatment of Marxism less orthodox and dogmatic than the deformedly propagandistic official Marxism.

Cultural Revolution and Other Mass Campaigns

CCTB, like other organizations, also went through periods of turmoil, disruption, class struggle in the various mass campaigns during the Maoist years. As early as 1952, the “three-anti” and “five-anti” campaigns affected the RCTB. Nonetheless, between 1953 and 1957, CCTB enjoyed a relatively tranquil period, although the 1955 *sufan* campaign already contained signs of what were to follow in later years. Chen Changhao was in charge of that campaign, and he used the same method from the Rectification Movement to struggle against isolated individuals (including a trusted aide of Shi Zhe), which amounted to about 10 people among the 200 staff employed by CCTB at the time.³⁴

As many of the CCTB staff members were Russian speakers or spent considerable time in Russia, the breakup of Sino-Soviet friendship also cast a suspicious light on CCTB,

³² When the first workshop on Bukharin was held at Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, participating CCTB’s scholars became the experts lecturing others. See 郑异凡 [Zheng Yifan], 史海探索 [*Explorations in the Sea of History*] (Hefei: Anhui daxue chubanshe, 2005), 9; CCTB, *50th Anniversary* 369. However, Su Shaozhi, China’s most well-known scholar on Bukharin in the 1980s, although mentioning CCTB’s participation in the workshop, did not particularly emphasize the important role contributed by CCTB in the reassessment of Bukharin in China. See 苏绍智 [Su Shaozhi], 十年风雨: 文革后的大陆理论界 [*Eventful Ten Years: The Theory World after the Cultural Revolution*] (Taipei: Shibao wenhua chuban qiye, 1996), 129-131.

³³ Maurice Meisner, ‘The Chinese Rediscovery of Karl Marx: Some Reflections on Post-Maoist Chinese Marxism,’ *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* 17 (3), (July-Sept.1985), 3.

³⁴ Shi *My Life*, 389-390; Zhang and Wang, *Zhang Zhongshi*, 56.

many of whom subsequently denounced as “revisionists” during the Cultural Revolution. Among the three deputy directors, Jiang Chunfang spent his time in Qincheng prison from 1968 to 1975, but in 1966 he was already attacked. Among the crimes he was accused of was acting as agent for the revisionist Russian experts.³⁵ Chen Changhao was to die in 1968, after suffering attacks from Red Guards in his hometown.³⁶ Among the three, Zhang Zhongshi seemed to have the better luck. He was initially elected as the deputy head of the revolutionary committee of CCTB in 1966, but the committee was overthrown in 1967, and Zhang was labeled a “capitalist-roader.” But he did not get thrown into prison, and since October 1968, he was able to resume work at CCTB, and since 1974, a leadership position.³⁷ The director, Shi Zhe, had left CCTB by 1957, and the directorship remained vacant until it was filled by Xu Liqun, a deputy minister of the Central Propaganda Department, in 1961.³⁸

During the early phase of the Cultural Revolution, much of the work of CCTB was suspended. From 1966 to 1970, basically no new publication of CWME appeared. Most members of CCTB were sent to the May Seventh Cadre School in Jiangxi.³⁹ However, in the March 1971 national conference on publication and press, Zhou Enlai re-emphasized the need to publish Mao’s and Marxist writings. Since 1971, CWME resumed publication, and together with it, *Selected Works of Marx and Engels* and *Selected Works of Lenin* also were compiled and published since 1972. The radicals also got a hand in the work of CCTB; they instructed

³⁵ Yang and Sun, *Jiang Chunfang*, 216-251.

³⁶ 范青[Fan Qing], 陈昌浩传 [*A Biography of Chen Changhao*] (Beijing: Zhongguo dangdai chubanshe, 1993), 316-317.

³⁷ Zhang and Wang, *Zhang Zhongshi*, 59-60.

³⁸ However, it appeared that Xu spent very little time at CCTB, his main work remained at the Propaganda department. CCTB essentially was still run by the trusted deputies Jiang, Chen, and Zhang. Xu also suffered attacks during the Cultural Revolution.

³⁹ 纪念册编辑组编 [Editorial Group of Memorial Essays], comp., 人是要有一点精神的——纪念翻译家、学者林基洲 [*Men Should Have Some Spirit: Remembering Translator, Scholar Lin Jizhou*] (N.P., 1995?), 205.

them to compile a volume *Marx, Engels, Lenin on Proletarian Dictatorship* (issued in 1974), which would serve to justify their power and policies.⁴⁰

Central Compilation and Translation Bureau: Post-Mao Transformation

By the time the Cultural Revolution was over, the leadership composition of CCTB had undergone changes. Jiang was released since 1974, but his mind and focus had shifted to the project *Encyclopedia of China*. Zhang had become ill since 1977. Wang Huide was appointed the directorship in 1978, and under him there was a new, and particularly capable and dynamic, deputy director by the name of Lin Jizhou. Lin was described by some of his colleagues as an academic entrepreneur⁴¹ who was held in high regard for his role in transforming CCTB into a much more research-based, think-tank-like organization.

Lin Jizhou and the Transformation of the Central Compilation and Translation Bureau

There were two areas in which Lin's leadership made a significant contribution to CCTB. First, he was the de facto editor-in-chief of the second edition of CWL. The first edition of CWL was based on the fourth edition of the Russian CWL. That edition was hugely flawed in one way: it was heavily influenced by the Stalinist cult. In addition, the subsequent publication of many other Lenin's writings, including a fifth edition of the Russian CWL, showed that the fourth edition was far from a complete *collected* works of Lenin. Furthermore, many volumes of the first edition of the Chinese CWL were completed in the late 1950s when CCTB was enthusiastically embracing the Great Leap Forward. The translation quality of these volumes remained wanting in many regards. In 1982, the Party center approved of the plan of a second edition. This edition was edited independently of the Russian editions. In addition, all annotations were completely rewritten to purge the Stalinist and Khrushchev's

⁴⁰ 郗卫东[Xi Weidong], '马列文献信息整理出版 60 年,' [60 Year of publishing and collecting Marxist-Leninist literature] in 马克思主义在中国 60 年 [60 Years of Marxism in China], edited by 俞可平, 王伟光, 李慎明 [Yu Keping, Wang Weiguang & Li Shenming] (Chongqing: Chongqing chubanshe, 2010), 237.

⁴¹ Editorial Group, *Lin Jizhou*, 142.

influences in the Russian editions. By 1990, all 60 volumes of this second edition of CWL were published. It is said that this edition contains the most complete collection of Lenin's writings in the world.⁴²

Second, perhaps the more important and what made CCTB what it is today, was Lin's leadership in support of the expansion of research activities. Lin showed his foresight by organizing and participating in many conferences and meetings with private entrepreneurs. He would also support the staff members to undertake field research. Such conferences, meetings and fieldwork were initially questioned by others, who could not see how these activities were related to the "translation" task of CCTB. However, Lin justified that Marxism as a developing field had to keep up with reality and these meetings and fieldwork would furnish CCTB researchers with first-hand experience with the reality of China's economic and social situation.⁴³ This shaped into a research style at CCTB which heavily emphasizes fieldwork, comparison, and empirical research. Two of CCTB's most well-known academic journals, *Marxism and Reality* and *Comparative Economic and Social Systems*, were established under his support. The latter journal for a time was edited by the famous liberal economist Wu Jinglian, even though Wu was not a CCTB staff. Yu Keping was also recruited under Lin's watch. As a CCTB researcher recalls, "With the support of Lin, Yu was able to break a new sky and ground." Lin died in 1993, and this caused a temporary slowing down of research activities at CCTB. But the promotion of Yu Keping to leadership level later would reinvigorate CCTB's research activities, and the reputation of CCTB as an influential think tank gradually took hold.⁴⁴

World Socialism Institute and Institute of Contemporary Marxism

⁴² CCTB, *40th Anniversary*, 10; Editorial Group, *Lin Jizhou*, 144-151.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 8, 10, 19, 21, 29, 61-67, 130, 136, 152.

⁴⁴ Interview with a senior scholar at the Global Development Strategy Division, August 15, 2012.

Henceforth, two research traditions were formed in CCTB: one inherited from the International Communist Movement Historical Materials Office, which focused more on historical and theoretical issues within Marxism, and the other one starting from the leadership of Lin Jizhou, which was more empirical and comparative and focused on China's issues. The Historical Materials Office would first be renamed as the International Communist History Institute of 1985, and later would evolve into World Socialism Institute in 1994. Staff members of this institute comprised mainly from the "old hands" at CCTB, some of them were professional translators as well. For example, Zheng Yifan, a CCTB's historian on Soviet Russia, undertook the reassessment of the relationship between Bukharin, Lenin, Stalin, and Trotsky concurrently with his participation under the project of the translation and editing of the second edition of CWL.⁴⁵ It also recruited new people, most of them were graduates of the discipline of the "history of international communist movement" in Chinese universities.⁴⁶

The other tradition was housed in the the second research institute of CCTB, the Institute of Contemporary Marxism, established in 1984. It was initially structured into three sections: philosophy, economics, and scientific socialism (corresponding roughly to the three components of Marxism). The philosophy section would focus on Western Marxism and Neo-Marxism (in contrast to the World Socialism Institute's focus on the "old revisionists"), whereas the economics section was headed by Rong Jingben, another dynamic, pro-reform academic. The scientific socialism section was to evolve into an important place for empirical research on Chinese politics. International academic collaborations also began under Institute of Contemporary Marxism. In the ensuing years, the Institute would recruit younger and more professional staff, most of them with PhDs in specialized disciplines, such as Yu Keping. It was also from here that the more directly relevant policy research began.

⁴⁵ Zheng Yifan, *Sea of History*, 11

⁴⁶ Interview with a senior scholar at the Marxism Division, August 15, 2012.

CCTB's researchers played an instrumental role in opening up the Chinese academia to numerous foreign thoughts and trends and also at times entered into fierce debates within Chinese academia. In the early 1980s, the big debate on Marxist humanism and alienation pitted the "orthodox" Marxists such as Hu Qiaomu and Deng Liqun against the more liberal reformist Marxists such as Wang Ruoshui. The CCTB's scholar who participated in this debate (Lu Meilin, an aesthetician attached to the International Communist History Institute) took the side of Hu and Deng. But in the late 1980s, when CCTB's scholars entered into active debate in the Chinese academia over the meaning and significance of Western Marxism (Lukacs, Althusser, Gramsci) in relation to the traditional, "orthodox" Marxism, they were much less critical than the mainstream interpretation. For example, CCTB's Du Zhangzhi disagreed with the view held by Xu Chongwen, who saw Western Marxism as simply reflecting the radical views of petty-bourgeoisie and incompatible with scientific Marxism. Du instead affirmed the status of Western Marxism as a form of Marxism.⁴⁷

Since the 1990s, CCTB's scholars would cast a wider net to include Japanese Marxism and western theories of globalization, civil society, deliberative democracy, social capital, good governance, risk society, and entering into the 21st century, they again shifted their attention to the current Marxist schools. Hence, the caricature that CCTB as an "orthodox ideological production house" that fails to take into account of the frontier development of scholarship is not necessary correct.⁴⁸ However, in concentrating their attention on mostly western thought, CCTB scholars have neglected socialist ideas in developing countries such as Fanon or the "subaltern studies" school in South Asia. Perhaps subtly also, such tendency

⁴⁷ 马晨 [Ma Chen], '中国国外马克思主义的历史发展,' [Historical Development of Studies of Marxism Abroad in China], *科学社会主义* [*Scientific Socialism*] 4, (2010), 133-136.

⁴⁸ He, Qinglian, 'CCTB's love story'; 何清涟 [He, Qinglian], 'Cong "Yi Junqing ba" kan Zhongguo Mazhe yanjiu' [Looking at China's Marxist Philosophy Studies through the Yi Junqing Affairs], 2013, available at <http://heqinglian.net/2013/01/22/yijunqing/> (accessed August 28, 2013).

actually reflected the priority being placed on integration with “modernity,” exemplified in this case by the scholarship in the western countries, under the reform agenda of the Party.

In 2011 there was a significant reshuffling of the organizational structure of the two research institutes. The reshuffling went beyond a change of name of both institutes. Significant transfers of personnel took place between them. The new Marxism Division inherited much of the old World Socialism Institute, but also absorbed theory researchers and the journal *Marxism and Reality* from the Institute of Contemporary Marxism, while the new Global Development Strategy Division inherited the policy-oriented and empirical research from the Institute of Contemporary Marxism. Hence it could be said that now there is a clearer research specialization between the two –one on theoretical and another on empirical.⁴⁹ CCTB’s reputation as a think tank primarily comes from the research at the Global Development Strategy Division. The Division is led by well-known political scientists including Yu Keping, He Zengke, and Yang Xuedong, and houses several research centers, including the Center for Global Governance and Center for Comparative Politics and Economics. Since it carried out empirical research in the early days of post-Mao reforms it has built extensive networks with local researchers and cadres throughout China. It calls such networks research bases. There is a non-mandatory policy in which a staff researcher will spend a year at a local governmental office to acquire direct experience of governing. The fieldwork-based research orientation accumulates into the well-known local government innovation project, in collaboration with several other universities. This local government innovation project establishes a database that covers all local government innovations and gives out biannual award to the best innovation. In addition, CCTB since 2010 also established a new social management innovation award that is more focused on the NGOs.

⁴⁹ Interview with a CCTB’s scholar at Marxism Division, August 13, 2012. However, this division should not be seen as absolute. Some scholars at the Marxism Division also work on contemporary political issues, such as comparative political party research and contemporary developments in Russian politics.

Marx-Engels-Lenin-Stalin Division and Central Documents Translation Division

On the other hand, the translation work at CCTB continues. Among the 300 staff that CCTB employs, about half are translators. Today, despite the name “Marx-Engels-Lenin-Stalin Division,” the main work of this division is to work on the second edition of CWME. This edition follows the international authoritative MEGA2.⁵⁰ It has completed about 20 volumes in the projected 70 volumes. After the second edition of CWL, the work on Lenin is considered more or less done, while Stalin is mostly banished today. CWS is not a complete set, as Stalin’s writings after 1934 were not included in CWS.⁵¹ The original Russian edition of CWS was also incomplete due to Khrushchev’s de-Stalinization policy. CCTB compiled and translated some of Stalin’s post-1934 writings first in *Selections from Stalin* (first published in 1962 as an internal publication), and then in the two-volume *Selected Works of Stalin*, the second volume of which contained some post-1934 writings.⁵² Although CCTB still holds many Stalin’s tracks, there was no plan to expand or revise CWS.⁵³

CCTB is the only authorized organ to translate works of central leaders into foreign languages. In addition to Mao, Zhou and Liu, the Central Documents Translation Division has also translated *Selected Works* of Zhu De, Deng Xiaoping, Chen Yun, and Jiang Zemin. It is aware of the Mao’s writings projects published by M. E. Sharpe, but does not participate in it. The main work that this division conducts today is the translation of the state and party documents into various foreign languages, including the general secretary’s political report to the party congress and the premier’s report to the the National People’s Congress. It also translates into English articles selected from the *Qiushi* magazine. Another work that this

⁵⁰ 王锡君 [Wang Xijun], ‘跨世纪的翻译工程, 不朽的理论宝库,’ [A cross-century translation project, an immortal theoretical treasure] in 共产党宣言与全球化 [*Communist Manifesto and Globalization*], edited by 北京大学马克思主义文献研究中心 [Center for Marxist Literature at Peking University] (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2001), 3-8.

⁵¹ The original Russian edition of CWS was also incomplete due to Khrushchev’s de-Stalinization policy.

⁵² CCTB, *50th Anniversary*, 222.

⁵³ Interview with a CCTB’s senior translator, August 17, 2012. The CCTB complex houses an exhibition center, and it has several statues of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Mao, but nowhere was Stalin to be found.

division is currently focusing on is the translation of the authoritative party history issued by the Party History Research Institute since 2010.⁵⁴

Today, CCTB's translation and compilation of the writings of Marx and Lenin strive to be as professional and accurate as possible. However, historically it is undeniable that translation and compilation of their writings could serve the ideological program of the Party in particular historical moments. For example, the translation of the term *bürgerliche recht* changed from *zichan jieji faquan* to *zichan jieji quanli* in 1977 (which was proposed by Zhang Zhongshi as early as 1958)⁵⁵ was partly an effort to attack the theoretical credentials of the Gang of Four.⁵⁶ After the downfall of the Gang of Four, Lin Jizhou mobilized CCTB to come out with several pamphlets of Lenin's writings to discredit the "class struggle" thesis of the radicals and to buttress "economic construction" as the primary task of socialism.⁵⁷

Central Compilation and Translation Bureau in the 21st Century

From 1983 to 2003 (1983 being the beginning year of the Seventh "five-year" plan for social sciences), CCTB undertook 7 main projects assigned by the Party center, 5 contracted projects from the individual departments of the Party or the State council, 30 projects from the State Social Science Research Foundation, and 45 projects from within.⁵⁸ There are three sources of research projects: projects mandated from the authorities (Party center, governmental departments, provincial and local governments), projects initiated by contract with the authorities or other academic (foreign or within China) organizations, and projects undertaken by the staff on their own. The funding of CCTB hence came from both central budget and from project grants.

⁵⁴ Interview with a CCTB's translator, August 21, 2012.

⁵⁵ Zhang and Wang, *Zhang Zhongshi*, 339.

⁵⁶ 张仲实 [Zhang Zhongshi], 张仲实文集 [*Essays of Zhang Zhongshi*] (Beijing: Zhongguo wenlian chubanshe, 1993), 870-878.

⁵⁷ Editorial Group, *Lin Jizhou*, 152.

⁵⁸ 中共中央编译局编 [Central Compilation and Translation Bureau], comp., 中央编译局 50 年 (1953-2003) [*50 Years of Central Compilation and Translation Bureau*] (Beijing: Zhongyang bianyujiju, 2003?), 10.

Project on Marxist Theoretical Research and Development

In 2004, the Party center approved the “Opinion on the Further Flourishing and Development of Philosophy and Social Sciences,” which launched this massive project.⁵⁹ The Project is billed as the new platform to build Marxist-based theoretical self-consciousness and self-confidence in the face of the onslaught of western thoughts. From this rationale, it definitely has a conservative outlook and tone and serves to consolidate the ideological control of the regime more to liberate scholarship from politics. In practice, it has also been a source of significant academic corruption. Since its launch, it has been under the direct guidance and supervision of several political heavyweights including Li Changchun, Liu Yunshan, and Liu Yandong,⁶⁰ most of them considered the “tuanpai” faction aligned with Hu Jintao.

Yi Junqing, the previous director of CCTB, reportedly had a close relationship with Liu Yunshan, and under his leadership, CCTB has been engaged in this Marxist project. CCTB undertakes two sub-projects of this Project –“Review and Refinement of Major Works of Classical Marxist Writers” and “Research on Basic Viewpoints of Classical Marxist Writers.” The former involves new compilations of the works of Marx, Engels and Lenin. The translation division of CCTB took charge of this sub-project and in the last few years had compiled a 10-volume *Selections from Marx and Engels* and a 5-volume *Collections of Lenin’s Writings on Special Topics*. The latter sub-project is arguably a more ambitious project, involving more than 200 scholars and experts from Central Party School, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Academy of Military Sciences, Ministry of Education, and other

⁵⁹ ‘中共中央关于进一步繁荣发展哲学社会科学的意见,’ [Party Center’s opinion on further advancing and developing philosophy and social sciences], in 十六大以来重要文献选编, 上 [*Compilation of Important Documents Since the 16th Party Congress, First Volume*], edited by 中央文献研究室 [Central Documents Research Office] (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 2011), 684-694.

⁶⁰ 徐光春 [Xu Guangchun], ‘努力增强理论自觉理论自信, 开创马克思主义中国化新局面,’ [To strive for the strengthening of theoretical self-consciousness and self-confidence, to take a new step to Sinicize Marxism], 求是 [Truth Seeking], 15, (2012), 27-30.

units, but CCTB assumes the leadership of this project. CCTB's Yu Keping and Yang Jinhai are two of the chief experts (*shouxi zhuanjia*) for this sub-project. The fundamental mission of this subproject is summarized in the so-called “four distinguishes” (*sige fenqing*): to distinguish which viewpoints are the basic Marxist principles that have to be upheld all the time, which ones are theoretical views that have to be further developed and revised in light of the changes in reality, which ones are dogmatic interpretations that have to be done away with, and which ones are erroneous viewpoints wrongly attributed to Marxism that have to be clarified. 18 theoretical and policy-related topics are covered under this subproject, including religion, nationality, war and peace, class and class struggle, proletarian dictatorship, Marxist political party building, developmental path of traditionally backward societies, political civilization, ideology, relationship between socialism and communism, ownership, peasant and agriculture, and other issues. Scholars would then use “four distinguishes” as the basis to identify the “correct” researches done on these issues. Reports and collected articles for each of this topic are published in a book series named “Forum on Marxism Research.”⁶¹ Yu Keping, CCTB's most famous liberal-oriented scholar, is the general co-editor of this series, together with a well-known conservative scholar from CASS, Li Shenming, and a moderately conservative scholar from Central Party School, Wang Weiguang. According to one interviewee, this is a deliberate arrangement made by the Party center to achieve balance between different ideological perspectives and between three of the most important think tanks of the party-state.⁶²

Marxism and Reformism at Central Compilation and Translation Bureau

⁶¹ 杨金海, 鲁克俭, 李百玲 [Yang Jinhai, Lu Kejian & Li Bailing], ‘马克思主义经典著作研究 60 年,’ [60 years of research of classical Marxist works] in 马克思主义在中国 60 年 [60 Years of Marxism in China], edited by 俞可平, 王伟光, 李慎明 [Yu Keping, Wang Weiguang & Li Shenming] (Chongqing: Chongqing chubanshe, 2010), 20.

⁶² Interview with a CCTB senior scholar at Marxism Division, August 13, 2012.

With such heavily Marxism-loaded and party-mandated research projects helmed by well-known conservatives (or even without them, on virtue of being the source of Marxist canons in a communist state), CCTB would be suspected to be a bastion of leftist-conservative thought. On the contrary, CCTB has built up its reputation as one of the more reformist think tanks among the research bureaucracies of the party, although we should be aware that in any organization there are conservatives and liberals. Nevertheless, CCTB's researchers are noticeably cosmopolitan and well-grounded in both Marxist and western scholarship. For some, this contradiction shows that Marxism has only become an empty shield that protects an ideologically bankrupt regime. However, it could be another way around: CCTB's status and acknowledged authority on Marxist discourse, method, and theory could shield its staff members from leftist critiques when controversial topics were introduced.⁶³

Furthermore, CCTB's scholars may not see a necessary contradiction between advocating political reforms, embrace of liberal ideas, globalization and Marxism. They view Marx's ideas (unlike Stalin or Lenin) to be far more liberating than the Stalinist (and even Leninist, according to some) deviations. One interviewee, who is a senior scholar recruited by CCTB in the 1980s, opined to the author that "Kautsky is correct, Lenin is more wrong. Mao has a lot of utopian thinking. And Marx is a liberal and democrat, and even a bit postmodern."⁶⁴ Even going back to Lenin could be liberating as well, as the "late Lenin" is increasingly become the source of ideas for political reforms. CCTB's scholars have very early on recognized the value of the thought of late Lenin in countering the Stalinist model.⁶⁵

Today the ethos of CCTB is going back to Marx, some acceptance of Lenin, and ditching of Stalin. Going back to Marx serves important legitimization function for the party's

⁶³ Interview with a CCTB senior scholar at the Global Development Strategy Institute, August 14, 2012.

⁶⁴ Interview with a CCTB senior scholar at Marxism Division, August 13, 2012.

⁶⁵ Zheng Yifan, *Sea of History*, 2005.

pro-capitalist agenda, and in this sense, CCTB's Marxism coincides with official Marxism. Maurice Meisner critiqued the draining of utopian elements and the return to a crude form of Marxist economic determinism in official Marxism in post-Mao era, which was supportive of the market-oriented reform agenda.⁶⁶ However, returning to Marx's "determinism" could also be liberating. While Marx was critical of capitalism, he also recognized that industrial capitalism is the foundation of socialism. Marx was deterministic in insisting that full development of capitalism had to precede socialism, which made Lenin, Stalin, and Mao seemingly more "voluntarist" by breaking away from the confines of Marx's historical materialist scheme. But the political and economic path laid down by Lenin and subsequently Stalin, the party-state and central planning economic model, had become confining structures themselves, to the extent that going back to Marx could mean a liberation from Leninism-Stalinism, and justification for introducing a variety of capitalist, liberal, and even democratic reforms. In this sense, CCTB's treatment of Marxism is far more open-ended than official Marxism. Therefore, the "four distinguishes" subproject that CCTB undertook may not sound as conservative as the name implies; it could have more liberal implications than generally assumed. This tradition of liberally interpreting Marxism, again, derives from its nature as the agency devoted to translating and researching original writings of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, and crucially, the critics within the Marxist tradition such as the "old revisionists."

Conclusion

CCTB has been more prominent in recent years, particularly owing to the fact that one of its key leaders, Yu Keping, has been a media starlet and consistent advocate for more democracy and political reforms. Nevertheless, the "Yi Junqing affairs" seriously damaged CCTB's reputation. Notwithstanding this scandal, there is no evidence that this is no more than an isolated incident involving the director only. It would be unfair to characterize CCTB

⁶⁶ Meisner, "The Chinese Rediscovery of Karl Marx."

as a mere ideological parasite, without noticing the significant contribution it has made in the Chinese academia and its role as a pro-reform think tank.

For a believer in historical materialism, the Party is ironically an intensively “ideational” organization, for it maintains perhaps the largest number of research organs of all political parties in the world. Apart from CCTB, there are also the Central Party School, Central Policy Office, Central Documents Research Office, Central Party History Institute, and other party-attached research organs, from the central level to the base level. The party’s research bureaucracy exists definitely not for window-dressing only. Increasingly many of them are opening up to the outside world, and engage in contemporary policy-related research.

The above analytical history presents how CCTB evolved from an authoritative translation house to a research organization and a think tank. The transformation of CCTB underscores the increasing importance accorded by the party to its own research organs. On the one hand, the translation and research work of CCTB closely follow the party agenda. Overall the translation and research support the reform and opening up direction of the party, while not denying the necessity for further political and governance reforms. Although not advocating for western-style democratization, it is well aware of the flaws of the Stalinist model put in place since 1949, and attempts to correct it by finding inspiration from the original writings of Marx and Engels, and to a less certain extent, Lenin as well. It also rapidly opens to the frontier trends of western scholarship, hoping to integrate the advanced scholarship from developed countries without losing their ground in Marxism. Therefore, it affirms the party’s overall reform direction while maintaining a kind of Marxist veneer.

On the other hand, the agency of CCTB is undeniable. Much of the research agenda and activities of the CCTB in the early post-Mao years were initiated with some opposition voices that questioned the research credentials of the staff members at CCTB. The move to

establish more empirical and contemporary policy-related research also faced similar objection, but CCTB's leaders perhaps were aware that to stay relevant they would have to push for CCTB's transformation as well. Engaging in numerous party-mandated projects and other foreign-funded projects build up its own reputation and makes it a pertinent force in the increasingly crowded research world in China. The agency of the staff members could also shape the way research direction is going. Hence, the "old hands" at the World Socialism Institute can rehabilitate almost all the "old revisionists" of the Second International and conclude from here the necessity and correctness of the reforms undertaken in the post-Mao years. Yu Keping and his colleagues can research sensitive issues such as democracy, human rights, corruption, sunshine laws, and other subjects without being accused of un-Marxist (apart from the leftist critics, of course).

There is still the question, of course, of how influential politically CCTB really is. The party may allow its existence to showcase its tolerance of diverse and liberal views, while does not necessary heed to its policy recommendations. The public face of Marxism, for example, is still heavily propagandistic, notwithstanding the much more open-minded Marxism found in CCTB, the party's very own premier Marxist research organization. Political reforms at the central level still move (very) slowly and cautiously, notwithstanding the extensive research on local political reforms done at CCTB. Nevertheless, beyond making direct policy impact, another way a think tank can exert influence is to influence the thinking of decision-makers from a macro, strategic sense.⁶⁷ Over the years CCTB has been the at the forefront in introducing many concepts such as globalization, good governance, social capital, and that such ideas have inevitably permeated into the thinking of central and local officials in

⁶⁷ 安库雷 [An Kulei], '何增科: 患上民主恐惧症是危险的,' [He Zengke: It is dangerous to be afflicted with a fear democracy syndrome] 南方人物周刊 [*Southern Personage Weekly*], 4 (2007), 38-38; 马昌博 [Ma Changbo], '解密中国官方智库谱系, 谁在为高层提供决策服务,' [Demystifying the genealogy of China's official think tanks: Who are providing service for high-level decision-makers] 南方周末 [*Southern Weekly*], October 10, 2007, available at <http://www.infzm.com/content/9526>, (accessed August 28, 2013).

formulating and planning policy. For example, Hu Jintao's political report to the 17th Congress of the Party included a section on "ecological civilization," which is concept first introduced CCTB. CCTB's push for local governance innovations has changed the attitudes of local officials for the better.

Finally, China still remains officially and ideologically committed to Marxism-Leninism. Even though economic reforms were introduced twenty to thirty years ago without any theoretical breakthrough in Marxism (they were still given ideological legitimation by the way Marxism was interpreted), political reforms proved much harder to form a consensus. If those reforms could be couched in terms of how Marx would have approved them, they could face weaker resistance. Hence, CCTB's "going back to Marx" form of open-ended Marxism is still quite relevant, for it is providing justifications and possibilities for the party to engage in serious political and economic reforms that can be traced back to and are firmly rooted in the original Marx.