Reconstructing the May Fourth Movement: The Role of Communication, Propaganda, and International Actors

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The May Fourth Movement, as a political and cultural movement, has been a key element in the master narrative of Chinese modernity. The components of this narrative have come mostly from the protagonists of this movement themselves. There have been several challenges to this narrative. They go as far back as the early 1930s, but they have recently been expanded. It has been argued that there is a linear development from the May Fourth radicalism to the Cultural Revolution,[1] that the beginnings of modern Chinese fiction go back to the early 1900s rather than the May Fourth Movement,[2] and that the historiography of the May Fourth protagonists was self-serving and weak in its accuracy.[3] These narratives have largely encased the May Fourth Movement into a nation-state historiography. The transcultural dimension of the May Fourth Movement has been either left out or largely marginalized. There are some exceptions, such as an article that traces the political and ideological thrust of the May Fourth Movement to President Woodrow Wilson's Committee on Public Information,[4] and a chapter that traces the

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1 Lin Yusheng 林毓生, *Wusi: Duoyuan de fansi* 五四: 多元的反思 [May Fourth: A reflection on pluralism] (Hong Kong: Sanlian Shudian, 1989); see also Lin Yusheng, *Crisis of Chinese Consciousness: Radical Antitraditionalism in the May Fourth Era* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1979).

2 Milena Doleželová-Velingerová, ed., *The Chinese Novel at the Turn of the Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980). There have been many more studies since, which flesh out this argument. For example, David Der-wei Wang, *Fin-de-Siècle Splendor: Repressed Modernities of Late Qing Fiction, 1848–1911* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

3 Milena Doleželová-Velingerová and Oldřich Král, ed., *The Appropriation of Cultural Capital: China's May Fourth Project* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001).

4 Hans Schmidt, "Democracy for China: American Propaganda and the May Fourth Movement," *Diplomatic History* 22, no. 1 (1998): 1–28.

connections of the conceptual apparatus (in terms such as "movement") of the May Fourth events to transcultural sources, which shows the many aspects of the movement itself that were inspired by the Korean March First Movement in 1919.[5] An encompassing study of the transcultural entanglement of this important movement is needed.

This study centers on the international nature of the May Fourth Movement by focusing on the crucial role played by foreigners, and in particular their role in the area of communication and propaganda. Within this framework, the structure of this article will first emphasize the nature of the events of May Fourth. May Fourth had both a New Culture (*Xin wenhua yundong* 新文化運動) agenda and a political agenda. My focus will be largely on the political agenda, but I will first give a short summary of some recent developments in the study of May Fourth New Culture. Then I will deal with the escape from the prison-house of nation-state historiography in the analysis of the May Fourth political context.

May Fourth as an event

May 4, 2019, marked the 100th anniversary of the student movement named after this date. Before analyzing this, it might be justified to wonder why this student demonstration—among the hundreds and thousands of such events—has received the title of being a "turning point in Chinese history,"[6] and has remained a battleground as to its historical significance to this day. An event is not an event; it becomes an event only in hindsight, even if it is planned. There are certain conditions that must be met for an event to deserve this title of honor: the event must epitomize previous developments, have a lasting impact on what follows, and have effective and committed protagonists to ensure that its status is publicly recognized.

May Fourth was not a random protest. It followed a plan, with prominent Peking University student leader Zhang Guotao 張國燾 (1897–1979) saying

5 Rudolf G. Wagner, "The Canonization of May Fourth," in *The Appropriation of Cultural Capital*, 66–120.

6 "Wusi yundong: weida de lishi zhuanzhedian" 五四運動：偉大的歷史轉折點 [The May Fourth Movement: The great historical turning point], *Renmin Ribao* [The People's Daily], May 4, 2009. https://www.chinanews.com.cn/cul/news/2009/05-04/1674153.shtml; Li Fei 李飛, "Wusi yundong: Zhonghua minzu zouxiang weida fuxing de lishi qidian" 五四運動：中華民族走向偉大復興的歷史起點 [The May Fourth Movement: The historical starting point for the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation], *Hongqi Wengao* [The Red Flag Manuscripts], June 15, 2021. http://www.qstheory.cn/dukan/hqwg/2021-06/15/c_1127564322.htm; Jin Chongji 金沖及, "Wusi yundong: weida de lishi zhuanzhedian" 五四運動：偉大的歷史轉折點 [The May Fourth Movement: The great historical turning point], Zhang Zhongjiang 張中江, ed., *Renmin Ribao* [The People's Daily], June 6, 2016. http://www.71.cn/2016/0606/893414.shtml.

on the evening of May 3, 1919, that "tomorrow is a mass movement."[7] He understood that it included a movement (*yundong* 運動) involving the "masses"—which means that it was not organized by a political party. The May Fourth leaders were basically rejecting party-organized movements. Nor was the event organized by the state. It rejected party-organized movements not only in theory, but also by its decision to fix its action specifically on May Fourth. This came with the rejection of another date, May 9, which was the day Liang Qichao's 梁啟超 (1873–1929) Progress Party (Jinbu dang 進步黨) was planning a demonstration. May 9 was already known as the "Day of National Shame" (Guochi ri 國恥日), so-called because it was the day in 1915 when China accepted most of Japan's Twenty-One Demands.[8] The protesters therefore decided to demonstrate on May Fourth, rejecting a party-organized event that would be focused on "national shame."[9]

The May Fourth protagonists were very active and successful in defining the character and importance of this event. Within a week of the demonstration, May Fourth already had one, or rather several, "spirits" (*jingshen* 精神) of the movement.[10] Within two weeks it had become a turning point in history, demarcating itself clearly with the lofty status of an event—and challenging the status of other prior happenings, such as the 1911 Republican Revolution itself.[11] The protagonists of May Fourth did not place themselves in the "eighth year of the Republic" (*Minguo ba nian* 民國八年) but rather in the year 1919, in a rejection of the Republican calendar. They were already claiming that May Fourth was a turning point in language, culture, and history with respect to increasing media attention and the impact on public opinion, broader societal organization, and state-party-social relations. It also opened the door for Hu Shih's 胡適 (1891–1962) (also known as Hu Suh) new values for society. The May Fourth protagonists were successful in establishing a master narrative that framed this in purely nationalistic terms, a narrative that has dominated scholarship to this day.

The May Fourth protagonists faced seven challenges, all of which focused on two main issues: the defense of Chinese sovereignty generally, and the threat of Japan specifically. These challenges were: the handling of the Twenty-One Demands in 1915; Wilsonism and the Treaty of Versailles in 1919; Thomas Lamont (1870–1948) of Morgan Bank, and the International Banking

7 Wagner, "The Canonization of May Fourth," 69–70.

8 See William A. Callahan, "National Insecurities: Humiliation, Salvation, and Chinese Nationalism," *Alternatives* 29 (2004): 199–218.

9 Wagner, "The Canonization of May Fourth," 69–82.

10 Wagner, "The Canonization of May Fourth," 70.

11 Wagner, "The Canonization of May Fourth," 95–96.

Consortium, formed in 1920; derailing the ratification of the Paris Treaty in the United States in 1921; derailing the renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance (Nichi-Ei Dōmei 日英同盟) in 1921; recovering Shandong for China at the Washington Naval Conference in 1922; and the determination to stay on course with the creation of the American Information Committee in China in the late 1930s, which continued to inform the public of Japan's hostile intentions towards China.[12] Although this last challenge only presented itself a decade or so later, it is nonetheless an offshoot of the May Fourth Movement.

Fig. 1. *George Sokolsky. 1933. Photo. Library Special Collections, University of California, Los Angeles.*

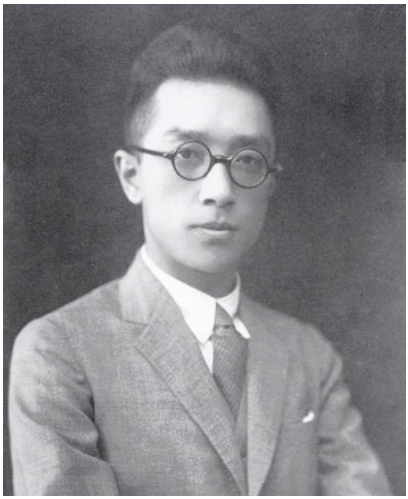

Fig. 2. *Hu Shih. 1917. Photo. Wikimedia Commons.*[13]

What was so pivotal about these first six challenges? In 1928, George Sokolsky (1893–1962; penname Gramada, Chinese name Suokesi 索克思) (Fig. 1), an American journalist writing for English-language newspapers in China and Japan, published his massive *Outline of Universal History*.[14] Sokolsky had been an active participant in the May Fourth Movement in Shanghai. He had befriended Hu Shih, mentioned above and a key May

12 This is no longer the China branch of the Committee on Public Information.

13 Accessed September 6, 2022, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hu_Shih_1917.jpg.

14 George Sokolsky, *Outline of Universal History* (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1928). In the book's foreword, Sokolsky states that his work is the first to examine world history from an East Asian perspective. This view was seconded by Hu Shih in his introduction to the book.

Fourth protagonist in Peking, and had sent each chapter of the book to him for comments and suggestions (Fig. 2). Eventually Hu Shih wrote a preface to the *Outline* in which he praised especially Sokolsky's last chapter on China's recent history:

> I cannot conclude this introduction without remarking on the author's most brilliant chapter on the history of the Chinese Republic. Contemporary history in China is full of personal feeling and partisan spirit, secret intrigues and controversial issues. Its source material is most difficult to access. The newspaper reports are either censored or purposely distorted; even documentary evidence is sometimes consciously fabricated. Those who are in the know rarely tell; and those who tell cannot always be trusted … But Sokolsky has his own way to get over these obstacles. Ever since his arrival in China ten years ago, he has been involved in Chinese politics. In 1919 he was aiding the student movement, and was a friend of the late Dr. Sun Yat-sen. In later years he came into contact with several important military groups. But he never lost his sympathy for the youth and the liberal faction. He has seen how contemporary history was made, and is now giving us a sympathetic story of Young China's uphill battle for national independence, political democracy, and social and cultural liberation—a story that for comprehensiveness and sympathetic understanding probably surpasses anything ever written on the subject.[15]

Written by a foreign participant in the May Fourth Movement and greatly praised by one of its chief Chinese protagonists, the story of "Young China" as told in the *Outline* provides something akin to the official insider view. The first six of our seven challenges are the main events found in the section of the *Outline* between 1915 and 1922. The seventh could not be included because it occurred after the book had been published.[16]

The international aspect of the May Fourth New Culture Movement

The May Fourth New Culture Movement became part of a dominant master narrative that remained influential into the late 1970s. Despite early challenges, many intellectuals, both in China and abroad, were willing to follow this account of the May Fourth protagonists. One challenge came from the left, from Chinese novelist and cultural critic Mao Dun 茅盾 (1896–1981).

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15 Hu Shih 胡適, "Introduction," in *Outline of Universal History*, by George Sokolsky (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1928), xiii.

16 The last chapter of Sokolsky's *Outline of Universal History* is on Republican China. Sokolsky, *Outline of Universal History*, 812–889.

In 1931, Mao Dun gave a speech to a Marxist-Leninist study group in which he bluntly declared that May Fourth was not part of the revolution, but its target. May Fourth, he claimed, was a bourgeois revolution that, after a short moment of being progressive, sank back into decadence and subservience to the imperialists. Real revolutionaries, he argued, should therefore target the May Fourth Movement.[17] Mao Dun's novel *Midnight* translated the narrative of the development of the Chinese bourgeoisie into a fictional plot with symbolic characters for the various agents in this drama.

The May Fourth protagonists were, however, strong enough and vocal enough to prompt efforts both on the Communist and KMT (Kuomintang, also known as the Chinese Nationalist Party) sides to co-opt and defang the movement, because neither side fully controlled it. The United Front agreement in 1937 had already determined that May Fourth was going to be the date of Youth Day. Youth Day was then declared an occasion for the KMT or CPC (Communist Party of China) leaders to praise young people for their unstinting loyalty to whatever the party had ordered them to do. They were labor heroes, party heroes. The very spirit of May Fourth was, in a sense, defanged and taken over by the state agencies. That is how it has remained to this day in the PRC (People's Republic of China). This author remembers how in 1989 there were two parallel celebrations. In the Great Hall of the People (Renmin Dahuitang 人民大会堂), Zhao Ziyang 趙紫陽 (1919–2005), the then Party General Secretary, was praising young policemen, soldiers, and workers for "the way they always loyally and truly followed the leadership of the Party" (*laolao shishi fuzong dang de lingdao* 老老實實聽從黨的領導). Outside the hall on Tiananmen Square, young people were trying to celebrate what they thought was the true May Fourth heritage. The hundredth anniversary of May Fourth occurred in 2019: to avoid what it considered would have been unpleasant developments, Peking University allowed only a symposium with five scholars to mark this anniversary, with the stipulation that no questions or comments from students were permitted.

The challenges to the cultural narrative about May Fourth were mainly internal. Renowned Czech sinologist Milena Doleželová's (1932–2012) edited 1980 volume *The Chinese Novel at the Turn of the Century* argued that the literary turning point of May Fourth was overrated because there already had been important changes in literature since the late Qing period, and many subsequent studies followed this. Furthermore, Perry Link argued that the language that May Fourth was pushing in literary works remained marginal for many, many years and was easily eclipsed by works that the May

17 Mao Dun, "'Wusi' yundong de jiantao: Makesi zhuyi wenyi lilun yanjiuhui baogao" '五四'運動的檢討 – 馬克思主義文藝理論研究會報告 [Critique of the May Fourth Movement: Report of the Marxist Literary Theory Research Association], in *Mao Dun quanji* 茅盾全集 [Complete works of Mao Dun], vol. 19 (Beijing: Renmin Chubanshe, 1991), 213–248.

Fourth protagonists decried as "mandarin duck and butterfly" (trivial) fiction.[18] These, however, were the works that people actually read. There were, as well, studies on conceptual history that showed that the adoption of key Western terms in Chinese was already taking place between 1900 and 1910, and that May Fourth was rather on the late side.[19]

The large claims that finally came, namely that May Fourth was the "Chinese Renaissance" or the "Chinese Enlightenment," were effectively dismantled some years ago by Yu Ying-shih in a fine essay.[20] "The Renaissance" became the English title of the New Culture journal *Xinchao* 新潮 in 1918. The notion that the "New Culture" advocated by Hu Shih was a Chinese renaissance was inspired by Hu's perusal of Edith Sichel's popular book *The Renaissance* (1914) during his return journey by ship following his graduation from Columbia University in 1917.[21] Even though the transcultural connections of the New Culture were evident and explicit, the critical take on May Fourth remained largely within a China-centered narrative. To give an example, Hu Shih wrote in 1933 in his *The Chinese Renaissance*, "slowly, quietly but unmistakably, the Chinese Renaissance is becoming a reality."[22] Following this quick-fix appropriation of big names, he continued, arguing that "the product of this rebirth looks suspiciously occidental; but, scratch its surface and you will find that the stuff of which it is made is essentially Chinese bedrock, which much weathering and corrosion have only made stand out more clearly the humanistic and rationalist China resurrected by the touch of the scientific and the democratic."[23]

Here we have the true "Chinese bedrock" suddenly becoming altogether Western, namely including scientific and democratic, the *sai* 賽 and *de* 德, traditions. That it is humanistic and rationalistic is straight out of the playbook of Hu's teacher John Dewey at Columbia. If one scratches Chinese time and tradition, what you get, once again, is straight out of the West. While Hu Shih himself was saying that May Fourth culture looks occidental, other Chinese

18 Perry Link, *Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies: Popular Fiction in Early Twentieth-Century Chinese Cities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981).

19 Federico Masini, *The Formation of Modern Chinese Lexicon and Its Evolution Toward a National Language: The Period from 1840 to 1898* (Berkeley: California University Press, 1993).

20 Ying-shih Yu, "Neither Renaissance nor Enlightenment: A Historian's Reflections on the May Fourth Movement," in *The Appropriation of Cultural Capital*, 299–320.

21 Edith Helen Sichel, *The Renaissance* (New York: H. Holt and Company, 1914). See Ying-shih Yu, "Neither Renaissance nor Enlightenment," 301.

22 Hu Shih, *The Chinese Renaissance* 中國的文藝復興 *(The Haskell Lectures, 1933)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934), unpaginated foreword.

23 Hu, *The Chinese Renaissance*, unpaginated foreword; see also Ying-shih Yu, "Neither Renaissance nor Enlightenment," 300–302.

writers such as Li Changzhi 李長之 (1910–1978) took him at his word in the 1940s and said that May Fourth culture was not merely "Western" but was a second-rate Chinese imitation of the West with no cultural substance whatsoever.[24] To call that a "Renaissance" was fatally exaggerated. He suggested that it was much closer to a shallow "enlightenment," an idea that was taken up by another May Fourth protagonist, Luo Jialun 羅家倫 (1897–1969).[25]

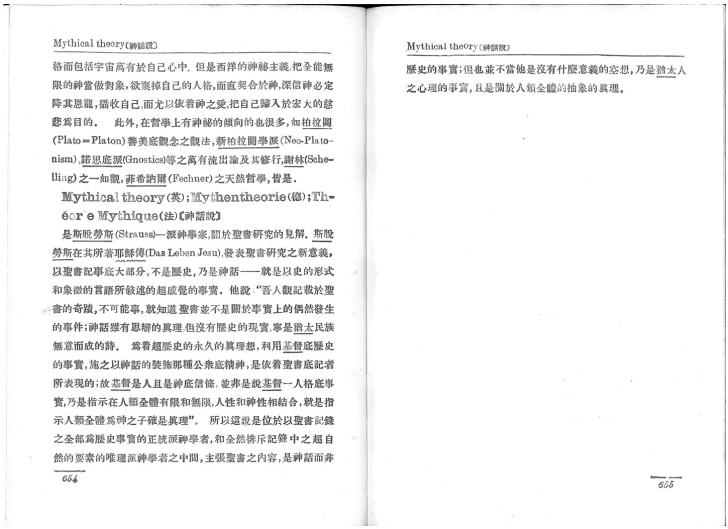
To get an idea about this "bedrock" of May Fourth culture mentioned by Hu Shih, it might be useful to take a look at a book from 1923 that set out to define the conceptual framework of May Fourth culture, the *Xin wenhua cishu* 新文化辭書 (Terminological handbook of New Culture).[26] It would seem natural that scholars dealing with May Fourth would use it for their studies. Published by the Commercial Press in 1923, the English title of the book translates New Culture into the much more modest "new knowledge." It is roughly nine hundred pages, went through sixteen unchanged printings by the early 1940s, and is one of the highest quality scholarly books, in terms of its breadth and depth of knowledge, to be produced in China during the twentieth century (Fig. 3). What could be better evidence for the meaning of the *Xin wenhua* (New Culture) than a *Xin wenhua cishu* contemporary with the movement itself?

Fig. 3. *Cover of* Xin wenhua cishu. *1923. Photo. Shanghai: Commercial Press.*

24 Ying-shih Yu, "Neither Renaissance nor Enlightenment," 309–311.

25 Ying-shih Yu, "Neither Renaissance nor Enlightenment," 309.

26 Tang Jinggao 唐敬杲, ed., *Xin wenhua cishu* 新文化辭書 (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1923).



Mythical theory(神話說)

格而包括宇宙萬有於自己心中，但是西洋的神祕主義，把全能無限的神當做對象，欲棄掉自己的人格，而直與合於神，深信神必定降其恩寵，領收自己，而尤以依着神之愛，把自己歸入於宏大的慈悲爲目的。　此外，在哲學上有神祕的傾向的也很多，如柏拉圖(Plato＝Platon)善美底觀念之觀法，新柏拉圖學派(Neo-Platonism)，諾思底派(Gnostics)等之萬有流出論及其修行，謝林(Schelling)之一如觀，菲希訥爾(Fechner)之天然哲學，皆是。

Mythical theory(英)；Mythentheorie(德)；Théorie Mythique(法)《神話說》

是斯脫勞斯(Strauss)一派神學家，關於聖書研究的見解。斯脫勞斯在其所著耶穌傳(Das Leben Jesu)，發表聖書研究之新意義，以聖書記事底大部分，不是歷史，乃是神話——就是以史的形式和象徵的言語所敍述的超感覺的事實。他說"吾人觀記載於聖書的奇蹟，不可能事，就知道聖書並不是關於事實上的偶然發生的事件；神話雖有思想的眞理，但沒有歷史的現實，寧是猶太民族無意而成的詩。　爲着超歷史的永久的眞理想，利用基督底歷史的事實，施之以神話的裝飾那種公衆底精神，是依着聖書底記者所表現的；故基督是人且是神底信條，並非是說基督一人格底事實，乃是指示在人類全體有限和無限，人性和神性相結合，就是指示人類全體爲神之子確是眞理"。　所以這說是位於以聖書記錄之全部爲歷史事實的正統派神學者，和全然排斥記錄中之超自然的要素的唯理派神學者之中間，主張聖書之內容，是神話而非

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Mythical theory(神話說)

歷史的事實；但也並不當他是沒有什麼意義的妄想，乃是猶太人之心理的事實，且是關於人類全體的抽象的眞理。

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Fig. 4. *Entry for "Mythical Theory" in* Xin wenhua cishu.[27]

Let us consider just one entry (Fig. 4). This page shows how all the entries are Western terms arranged according to the Latin alphabet. This is followed by the Chinese translation and the way these terms appear in other European languages. For entries of persons, such as Bergson, there is always a bibliography given in the original language, with a Chinese translation. No Chinese book after 1949 has ever reached this level of scholarly quality both in terms of the sophistication of the entries and the bibliographic quality of the work. Some of these entries are truly remarkable, with some, such as the entry on Indian Buddhism, running to eighty pages in length.

It is noteworthy that in the entire book nothing Chinese qualifies as being a part of the New Culture. There is not a single Chinese person, event, intellectual current, or philosophical proposition included in the book. It is clear that in the understanding of the time, *Xin wenhua* (New Culture) is a completely Western phenomenon. The writer of the present article is not inventing this viewpoint. This is what a standard handbook says, a book that at the time could have been found on everybody's desk. The people who worked on it included Mao Dun, among many others. Research on this amazing book has only just begun.[28]

27 Tang Jinggao, *Xin wenhua cishu.*

28 Barbara Mittler, "Useful New Knowledge for Everyone to Digest? Transcultural Remakings of the Encyclopedic in the *Encyclopedic Dictionary of New Knowledge* (Xin wenhua cishu 新文化辭書, Shanghai 1923)," in *China and the World—the World and China,* vol. 3: *Transcultural Perspectives on Modern China*, ed. Barbara Mittler, Joachim Gentz, Natascha Gentz, and Catherine Yeh (Gossenberg:

The May Fourth political agenda, propaganda, and the role of foreign actors—Challenge one: Japan's Twenty-One Demands in 1915

The two core elements defining the political focus of May Fourth are sovereignty as a principle, and the specific policy of rejection of Japan's takeover of the German Shandong concession. When Japan joined the war on the Allied side, it occupied Shandong directly, forestalling plans by the Chinese government, which had also joined on this side, to recuperate Shandong. There is an evident continuity in the May Fourth protest after the Chinese handling of Japan's Twenty-One Demands in 1915; even some of the key players are the same. Now, in 1919, there was an assumption that the Peking government—which included some of the same persons who had signed the Twenty-One Demands, such as Cao Rulin 曹汝霖 (1877–1966)—would sign the Paris Agreement and again betray the principle of Chinese sovereignty. This gained plausibility by the fact that the Peking government had signed a treaty with Japan in late 1918 that confirmed the contested validity of the agreement on the Twenty-One Demands.

All sides in this controversy operated with the new understandings of politics and diplomacy that resulted from World War I. This is characterized by the realization of the importance of publicity and propaganda. All the participants in the war, whether German, Japanese, French, English, or American, were setting up propaganda departments run by the state. These propaganda departments were attempting to convince their own citizens of the need to support the war, to weaken their opponents' conviction of their own victory, and to secure the neutrality of the neutrals or win their allegiance. Of greatest importance in our analysis are developments in the United States. Wilson had won his re-election in 1916 with a platform of keeping the United States out of the war. A year later, when Germany began sinking American passenger ships that it claimed were transporting war material, Wilson switched and joined the war. Suddenly there was a great need to convince the American public to enter this far-away war and accept the huge sacrifices of human life and money that this involved. Quite apart from Wilson's own original anti-war platform there were very strong ethnic German and politically pro-German groups in the United States, and German propaganda did its best to mobilize them to help keep America out of the war. The realization of the importance of publicity and propaganda came with a changing attitude towards the public. Once regarded as open for rational information and discourse, the public was now

Ostasien, 2019), 25–40. See also Leo Ou-fan Lee, "*Xin wenhua cishu* (An Encyclopedic Dictionary of New Knowledge): An Exploratory Reading," in *China and the World*, 41–51.

deemed as collectively irrational "masses."[29] Thus we see the rise of the press and other media as platforms of propaganda. The development of the tabloid press since the late nineteenth century already included an understanding that the idealized enlightenment ideal of common sense prevailing in a rational public discourse did not really match the real-life psychology of the masses. In an influential book that was directly translated into many languages and even became mandatory reading for members of the *politbureau* of the Chinese Communist Party in the 1980s, Gustave Le Bon (1841–1931) outlined in 1895 what he saw as the essential irrationality of the masses. In his *La Psychologie des Foules* (The psychology of the masses),[30] published in 1895, he claimed that the masses were not rational. Collectively, they harbored all sorts of wild fantasies, and a good politician had to be able to control them. A good politician had to keep the masses on the right course, otherwise they might spread chaos. The government had to use propaganda as a positive means of preventing the masses from getting out of control, which they would otherwise spontaneously do.

This assumption fed a notion that nations at war had to make particularly concerted propaganda efforts because such crisis situations were especially susceptible to collective irrationality. In 1918, to give an example, the American military assessed the relative importance of different factors for a victorious outcome such as military hardware, logistics, information, strategy, alliances, and psychology. It concluded that the psychological factor alone outweighed all the other factors taken together. The establishment of propaganda organizations reflects this assessment. In many cases, these organizations were led by or included people with experience in the tabloid press, the most famous case being the British tabloid press czar Alfred Harmsworth (Alfred Lord Northcliffe) (1865–1922). The British had set up a War Propaganda Bureau at the beginning of the war, which was renamed the "Ministry of Information" in 1917. Lord Northcliffe's papers had long been stridently anti-German, and he was eventually made "Director of Propaganda in Enemy Countries" under the Ministry of Information. The counterpart in the United States was the Committee on Public Information (CPI) under George Creel.[31] Its members, such as Freud's nephew Edward Bernays, became key figures in the two areas that developed remarkably between the wars, namely, propaganda and advertising. The art and science of advertising was also moving from providing information to using other instruments of propaganda to convince people to buy.[32]

29 Gustave Le Bon, *Les Lois Psychologiques de l'Évolution des Peuples* (Paris: Alcan, 1894); Published in English as *The Psychology of Peoples* (New York: Macmillan, 1898). This book was instrumental in articulating the shift.

30 Gustave Le Bon, *La Psychologie des Foules* (Paris: Alcan, 1907 [1895]).

31 See George Creel, *How We Advertise America* (New York: Harper and Brother Publisher, 1920).

32 Edward Bernays, *Propaganda* (New York: H. Liveright, 1928).

The result of these developments was a conviction, shared by all sides, that the effect of convincing the public by whatever means of social action to accept a certain political point of view would have a huge impact on government. This opened a window for social actors to impact their own and foreign governments without support from state authorities. This was how the situation appeared in 1915, when the Chinese government was under the stern orders of Japan to keep the Twenty-One Demands quiet in a classic exercise of secret diplomacy. But Japan had not realized that times had changed. Some members of the Chinese government shared with the foreign community in China the understanding that, given the power asymmetry between Japan and China at the time, the only way to block the Twenty-One Demands would be to divulge them, to make them public, and to put the Japanese on the defensive because of their outrageous violation of Chinese sovereignty. Neither the French nor the British were interested in blocking Japan, because Japan had just entered the war on their side, although there was a strong tendency in Japan at the time to side with Germany because many assumed that the Germans might be victorious. In short, there was no hope that Great Britain, France, and the United States would intervene with a joint diplomatic maneuver to protect China.

Fig. 5. *Chow Tzu-ch'i (Zhou Ziqi, 1869–1923). 1910. Photo. Wikimedia Commons.*[33]

Fig. 6. *W.H. Donald and Soong Mei-ling 宋美齡 (Madame Chiang Kai-shek). 1936. Photo. Wikimedia Commons.*[34]

33 Accessed September 6, 2022, https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Zhou_Zi_qi.jpg.

34 Accessed September 6, 2022, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:%E5%AE%8B%E7%BE%8E%E9%BE%84%E4%B8%8E%E7%AB%AF%E7%BA%B3.JPG.

Fig. 7. *Roy Scott Anderson. 1924. Photo. State Historical Society of Missouri.*[35]

Events moved quickly. President Yuan Shikai's 袁世凱 (1859–1916) special envoy to Japan, Chow Tzu-ch'i (Zhou Ziqi 周自齊, 1869–1923) (Fig. 5), sent a telegram to Shanghai, to an Australian journalist named William Henry Donald (Duan Nei 端納, 1875–1946) (Fig. 6). The telegram read, "PLEASE RETURN IMMEDIATELY STOP MATTERS OF GRAVE CONCERN TO ALLIES HAPPENING HERE."[36] In *Donald of China*, a 1948 book based on Donald's own narrative that details his remarkable role in China during the Republic, he went to Peking and contacted the man he trusted as being most knowledgeable about the personalities, factions, and issues of Chinese politics, the American Roy Scott Anderson (1883–1925), who wrote political commentary under the pen name of Bruce Baxter (Fig. 7).

Anderson knew that Japan was maneuvering but had no details as to how. Donald went to Chow Tzu-ch'i, but although Chow had telegraphed him to come, he told him he could not help. Donald then noted down what he thought might be the Japanese demands and asked Chow to simply strike out those that were wrong. Donald was largely right, and then he asked for hints about those he had failed to anticipate. He went through the same process with several other high government officials until he felt he had a reliably complete list. After talking to the American ambassador, Paul Reinsch (Rui Enshi 芮恩施, 1869–1923) (Fig. 8), who was helping him, he tried to get this list published.

35 John Benjamin Powell Papers C3663, folder 197.

36 Earl Albert Selle, *Donald of China* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1948), 153.

Of course, he had no hard evidence. Once the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times*, and the *London Times* received his list, they called their respective foreign offices and the local Japanese embassy for confirmation. The Japanese were adamant that these were all poorly invented lies. Because Donald had no hard evidence and Japan was an ally of the Europeans, and there were some officials in the U.S. Department of State who felt that Japan had legitimate interests in China, the foreign offices sided with Japan.[37] None of the papers published Donald's story. The Japanese impact was strong enough to block publication. Eventually, however, another foreigner, George Morrison (1862–1920) (Fig. 9), who was working as a translator for the Chinese foreign office, walked out of a meeting with him, ostensibly for an urgent call, leaving a pile of papers on the table with a look suggesting that Donald might find what he wanted in them. Indeed, they contained the official internal translation of the Twenty-One Demands.[38] What Donald did not know was that someone in the Chinese foreign office in collaboration with Reinsch had agreed to leak the document to Donald to get it out to the public.[39] After a Chicago newspaper published the story, all the big papers followed suit, Japanese denials notwithstanding. The English-language papers in China, and then the Chinese papers, also carried the story. The strong line against the Japanese demands taken by these papers, even as they remained critical of China's inability to manage its own affairs, forced Japan to accept that China would not sign the most humiliating demands contained in group five, which would have established Japanese supervisors in key sectors of the Chinese government. Again, Donald was involved. The Japanese ultimatum to sign the demands was to end at ten p.m. the next day, so at one p.m., Lu Zhengxiang 陸徵祥 (1871–1949), the Chinese Foreign Minister, asked Donald to write the Chinese reply to the Twenty-One Demands. He did so, omitting the fifth group, which was eventually accepted by the Japanese.[40]

The situation led to an interaction where the Chinese government had considerable agency, but they could not exert it since, if the demands were divulged, the Japanese could threaten with military action. In a convoluted manner of involving Chinese government officials, George Morrison, who was a foreign employee of the Chinese foreign office, and U.S. Ambassador Reinsch, organized a targeted leak to Donald, who was again asked to draft the Chinese answer. Unknown to any of these actors, the Russian Czar's ambassador in

37 Selle, *Donald of China*, 163–164.

38 Selle, *Donald of China*, 153–165.

39 Mordechai Rozanski, "The Role of American Journalists in Chinese-American Relations, 1900–1925" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1974), 222–224.

40 Selle, *Donald of China*, 166–169.

Tokyo had asked the American Carl Crow (1884–1945) from the China Press in Shanghai, who happened to be in Tokyo, to come to see him for a change of address of his subscription (Fig. 10). This was a strange invitation. No one was there when Crow came into the reception room, but a sheet of paper lay on the table, and from the large letters Crow deciphered he deduced that these must be Japanese demands on China. Assuming that the purpose of his invitation was to leak this document to him, he put it into his pocket. The ambassador eventually came in and dealt with the change of address without ever mentioning the paper. Crow had a hard time getting a copy past the Japanese telegraph censorship, but eventually succeeded in having the United Press International publish it at nearly the same time as Donald.[41]

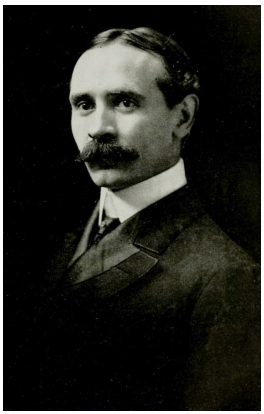


Fig. 8. *Paul S. Reinsch. 1917. Photo.* The World's Work.[42]

Fig. 9. *George Ernest "Chinese" Morrison. 1952. Photo. Royal Historical Society. Photographs Collection NPG.*

Fig. 10. *Carl Crow. 1940. Photo. State Historical Society of Missouri.*[43]

The use of targeted propagandistic media messages turned out to be effective. The experience convinced Reinsch, Donald, and the Chinese government of the importance of means such as these. In this case, international public opinion was the decisive factor. Although there was a large demonstration in Peking against signing the Twenty-One Demands, with some two hundred

41 Carl Crow, *I Speak for the Chinese* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1937), 2–3. See also Paul French, *Carl Crow—A Tough Old China Hand: The Life, Times, and Adventures of an American in Shanghai* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2006), 62–63.

42 *The World's Work* 35, no. 2 (December 1917).

43 Carl Crow Papers 1913–1945, C0041.

thousand people protesting, this did not at that moment have the same impact as international public opinion.

China at the time was in an asymmetrical situation in terms of its communications. Namely, information about the Twenty-One Demands, a copy of which was lying in a government office in Peking, reached the Chinese public by being published by Donald first in the *Chicago Daily News*. From the *Chicago Daily News,* it reached the *Washington Post*. From the *Washington Post* it reached the *Washington Post* correspondent in China. The *Washington Post* correspondent in China conveyed it to the *North China Herald*. And from the *North China Herald* it was translated into Chinese by the *Shenbao* in Shanghai.

Why did the Chinese-language papers not get the information from the wire services? There were three news agencies of importance at the time, namely, Reuters, which was British, Kokusai, which was Japanese, and Havas, which was French. The German news agency was already no longer allowed to be active. The only Chinese-language paper that had subscribed to any news agency was the *Shenbao* in Shanghai, which since 1884 had maintained a subscription to Reuters. The problem was that after the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902 to mutually recognize and support each other as the leading naval power in their respective spheres, Reuters had made an agreement with Kokusai, the Japanese State Agency, that all East Asian news would be collected by Kokusai, and Reuters would distribute it. So whatever Reuters customers in England or the United States would know about China came through a Japanese source.[44] No wonder, then, that Reuters carried only the Japanese denials of the truthfulness of the story about the Twenty-One Demands. In this international flow of information even the United States was still largely marginalized.

Since the late Qing period there had been efforts by individual journalists to establish independent lines of communication. The key figures were Thomas Millard (Mile 密勒, 1868–1942), who later founded *Millard's Review* in China (Fig. 11); Fred McCormick (1870–1951), the Peking correspondent of the Associated Press; and the redoubtable Australian journalist George Morrison, who then still wrote for the *London Times*. Although the United States had developed a Pacific presence since Theodore Roosevelt's Great White Fleet came to East Asia in 1907, and although Roosevelt's successor William Taft had East Asian experience and continued to focus attention on East Asia after he had become president in 1909, there was as yet no U.S. government involvement.

44 Schmidt, "Democracy for China," 4. See also Rozanski, "The Role of American Journalists," 291–310.

Fig. 11. *Thomas Millard. 1942. Photo.* New York Times.[45]

In 1915, Ambassador Reinsch—who held what would be considered strong "Wilsonian" ideals about the self-determination of peoples before Wilson, and had developed close contacts with Chinese individuals in and out of government as well as among foreigners in China who were committed to safeguarding China's sovereignty—acted on his own rather than on his government's initiative. In terms of the impact of U.S. media in China, the news about the Twenty-One Demands was a turning point because it came with strong expressions of American opinion. Articles in the American press, which described resistance to the Twenty-One Demands as a sacred duty, were reprinted in the *North China Herald*, and from there were translated into the *Shenbao* and other Chinese-language papers. This gave legitimacy and standing to those Chinese inside and outside the government who opposed President Yuan Shikai's willingness to sign off on the Japanese demands. The active and important role of foreigners in securing China's territorial integrity and sovereignty did not start in 1915 but actually went back as far as the 1860s. One may argue that it was mostly guided by an enduring interest in maintaining open commercial access to all parts of China and preventing any of the foreign powers from establishing exclusive zones. Open commercial access, however, presupposed a Chinese government capable of securing order in society. Since the beginning of the Republican period, no such government had been established; rather, the country was divided into north and south as well as various warlord-controlled territories. Consequently, there was a

45 *New York Times*, September 9, 1942, 23.

strong current of opinion in the West and Japan that some outside control was necessary, and during the war Japan emerged in the eyes of many as the only power willing and able to establish such control. Reinsch and his allies differed from this opinion by maintaining a Chinese right to sovereignty as a principle, even while being fully aware and critical of the Chinese failures at governance. They were introducing a moral principle into a political debate largely dictated by power politics. Greatly reinforced by Wilson's speeches and his plan for a League of Nations, this principled stand gave the moral high ground to the public, rather than diplomatic efforts to thwart the Japanese demands in 1915 and the movement against the Chinese government's willingness to accept Japan's taking over the German concession in Shandong in 1919.

The foreigners and the Chinese involved in defending Chinese sovereignty and thwarting Japan's demands in this case were operating and cooperating on their own initiative and understandings. As I have outlined, these individuals included Ambassador Reinsch, the Russian Ambassador Nikolai Kudashev, Anderson, Donald, Morrison, and Crow as well as Chinese officials such as Zhou Ziqi whose government under Yuan Shikai was willing to sign off on the Japanese demands.

All sides in this controversy of 1915, whether they tried to prevent the publication of the demands or pushed for their international release, had become aware, mostly from the North American example, of the power of public opinion and the importance of investigative journalism in its formation. An analysis of China's reaction to the Twenty-One Demands that fails to take into account the actual transcultural connections and their dynamics is bound to fail the historical record.

Challenge two: Wilsonism and the Versailles Treaty of 1919

Challenge two was Wilsonism. In 1919, at Versailles, Wilson signed-on to Japan's understanding with England and France that it would inherit Germany's Shandong concession. After Wilson had led the United States to enter the war in 1917, he developed a broad political program in his wartime speeches. The United States, he argued, was entering the war not to defend itself or in search of spoils, but to promote two high principles, namely, the sovereignty of nations and democracy. For this he argued for the establishment of the framework for a lasting peace, namely, the League of Nations.

World War I took place in a new media environment. The cables, the "wireless," the news agencies, and the daily newspapers gave this war for the first time a huge global media presence in real time. Many people in Asia began to take an interest in international matters because they had access to it daily. Wilson's speeches were part of this media presence of the war.

The Committee on Public Information, which was set up by Wilson in 1917 a week after the United States entered the war, was a reaction to this changed

media environment. Its primary targets were domestic audiences in the U.S., the enemy, and the neutral countries in Europe and Latin America. East Asia was considered marginal to this effort even though Ambassador Reinsch was pushing very strongly for a China Branch because he felt that with all the focus on Europe, Japan would be free to gain control over China.[46]

Fig. 12. *Chiang Mon-lin. 1931. Photo.* The China Weekly Review.[47]

Fig. 13. *Feng Youlan. 1925. Photo.* The China Weekly Review.[48]

As Reinsch's suggestion was not approved, the ambassador took matters into his own hands. He set up a group of translators to translate Wilson's speeches and important war news into Chinese.[49] In his translation committee, we find two people who would become famous in their own right: The

46 Paul S. Reinsch, *An American Diplomat in China, 1913–1919* (Garden City, NY: Page & Company, 1922), 159; Rozanski, "The Role of American Journalists," 295–298.

47 John B. Powell, *Who's Who in China, 4th ed.* (Shanghai: The China Weekly Review, 1931), 80.

48 John B. Powell, *Who's Who in China, 3rd ed.* (Shanghai: The China Weekly Review, 1925), 270.

49 Already in mid-1917, more than a year before the Committee on Public Information China branch was officially established in China by Reinsch, he had recruited missionary volunteers to translate Wilson's speeches into Chinese so they could be distributed to the press or published in pamphlet form. See Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 101.

translator of Wilson's speeches was Chiang Mon-lin (Jiang Menglin 蔣夢麟, 1886–1964), who received his doctorate degree from Columbia University in 1917 under John Dewey and became president of Peking University in 1919 (Fig. 12); and the main translator for the war news, historian of philosophy Feng Youlan 馮友蘭 (1895–1990) (Fig. 13). Chiang's Chinese translation of Wilson's wartime speeches had already been published in 1917 by the Commercial Press (Fig. 14). It became a bestseller in China and around the world, and was distributed to some twenty-five thousand Chinese "opinion leaders," firmly establishing in the minds of the younger generation the notion of China's right to this modern notion of "sovereignty." [50] The criticism of Japan by the May Fourth protagonists was thus based not only on disdain for the "dwarfs from the East," as the Japanese were often referred to in China, but on a hallowed principle sanctioned by the President of the United States, who had matched principle with action by entering the war.

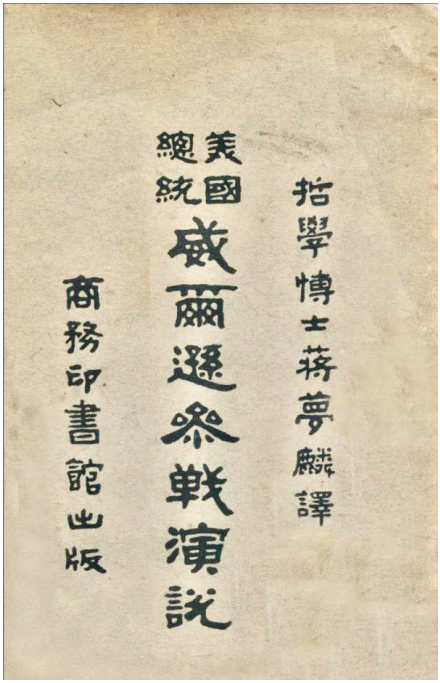


Fig. 14. *Cover of Chiang Mon-lin's* [Jiang Menglin] 蔣夢麟 *Chinese Translation of Wilson's Wartime Speeches. 1917. Commercial Press.*[51]

50 Schmidt, "Democracy for China," 10–11; and Carl Crow, *China Takes Her Place* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1944), 113–114. Here, Crow credits Reinsch with the idea of translating and publishing all of Wilson's speeches.

51 Woodrow Wilson, *Meiguo Zongtong Weierxun canzhan yanshuo* 美國總統威爾遜參戰的演說 [President Wilson's war speeches], trans. Chiang Mon-lin 蔣夢麟 (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1917).

Ambassador Reinsch was not alone in his support of the ideal for the rights of national sovereignty. In 1909, President Taft had appointed Charles Crane (Ke Lan 柯蘭, 1858–1939), a wealthy business heir from Chicago, to become U.S. ambassador to China (Fig. 15). Because of a comment that seemed to deviate from government policy, his appointment was cancelled before he left the U.S. But when Ambassador Reinsch resigned in 1919, Wilson appointed Crane as his successor. As we shall see, Crane, who is better known for his engagement in favor of the independence and sovereignty of Arab states, silently and very effectively continued Reinsch's anti-Japanese, pro-Chinese sovereignty policies and commitments.[52]

Fig. 15. *Charles R. Crane. 1909. Photo.* The World's Work.[53]

Eventually, a man associated with Crane gained a leading position within the Committee on Public Information, and Reinsch was able to convince him to set up a China branch. As this happened only in August 1918, the branch lasted for only nine months, and Wilson dissolved this propaganda institution altogether after the war's end. This China branch was run by Carl Crow, who later set up the first advertising agency in China. Others in the core group were John B. Powell (1888–1947), the editor of *Millard's Review* at the time (Fig. 16), and Paul Reinsch, the ambassador. The branch's activities were supported

52 Rozanski, "The Role of American Journalists," 281–285.

53 *The World's Work* 18, no. 5 (1909).

by the Americans Thomas Millard, Roy Anderson, and Rodney Gilbert, all of them regular contributors to the *North China Daily News*, as well as by George Sokolsky and the Australian William Henry Donald, whom we have already encountered. We see here a group of foreigners running this China branch of the Committee on Public Information in cooperation with Chinese intellectuals who contributed connections and translations.

Fig. 16. *John B. Powell. 1923. Photo. State Historical Society of Missouri.*[54]

The group was held together by a strong commitment to China's sovereignty, a critical attitude toward Japan's plans in China, and a critical view of China's chaotic political institutions, factions, and warlords. I suggest that it might be called the "Betterment of China group." The group had deep contacts in all levels of Chinese society, from the various governments to the different warlords, from business and educational associations to foreign businesses and diplomatic representatives, and finally to the newly formed student associations. These men, their frustration about governance in China notwithstanding, all had long-term commitments to China, and some of them paid dearly for it.

The activities of the CPI have been described in detail elsewhere, and for the China branch, Hans Schmidt's 1998 paper "Democracy for China: American Propaganda and the May Fourth Movement" remains a classic.[55] The radical reduction of the May Fourth Movement to an American-inspired, anti-Japanese cabal that was to secure U.S. domination in China has been a standard trope in Japanese writing since the 1920s and has found a recent revival in an article by Toshihiro Yamagoshi.[56]

54 John Benjamin Powell Papers, C3663, folder 197.

55 Schmidt, "Democracy for China."

56 Toshihiro Yamagoshi, "The Media Wars: Launching the May Fourth Movement—World War I and the American Propaganda Activities in China, Led by P. S. Reinsch and Carl Crow," n.d., Geocities, Digital Archive for Chinese Studies, Institute of Chinese Studies, University of

The China branch swiftly went to work. Because the cables were all in other hands, it established a modern wireless link directly to the United States, with the result that an American perspective on the war was quickly available in China through Chinese translations. The dispatches and comments were distributed without charge, and Chinese papers were happy to publish them. The committee mobilized the community of American businessmen, missionaries, and educators, and reached out through them to Chinese opinion leaders. With their help, Crow drew up a list. This was a very effective method of personalized propaganda. The Committee placed posters all over China with Wilson's pictures, slogans, and advertisements that had been sent from the central office in Washington.[57] China suddenly became an advising platform for Wilson's ideals. The May Fourth protests were driven by Wilsonian ideals even though they were directed against a decision by Wilson at the Paris Peace Conference that was seen as directly undermining Chinese sovereignty. The May Fourth students were not alone, and they acted with the awareness that they were part of an international movement that was sanctioned by the highest principles. This was not only true for the principles but also for their practice. Since March 1919, the Chinese press had been full of reports concerning the symbolic acts and manifestations appealing to the Paris Conference to grant self-determination, especially to colonized countries such as India, Vietnam, and Korea. These reports often came with editorial comment in an effort to impose guilt upon Chinese readers for their lack of interest and action. Eventually, for the staging of the May Fourth demonstration itself, the immediate model down to the smallest details was the Korean March First Movement of 1919 against Japanese colonial power.[58]

The members of the China branch of the Committee on Public Information also rejected the shift in the official stance of the U.S. and remained true to Wilsonian ideals. They continued their work well after overseas actions of this committee were officially stopped, and eventually set up their own organization. Reinsch, a professor of political science who was a Wilsonian before Wilson, remained so after Wilson had changed tack in Paris; unwilling to support Wilson's compromise, Reinsch resigned in 1919, became an advisor to the Chinese government, and set up the Chinese Political Science Association.

Wilson had come out in favor of sovereignty or self-determination as a solution for the successor states of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, but never

Heidelberg, accessed April 1, 2022, http://www.sino.uni-heidelberg.de/cgi-bin/webkat_imperia/regsrch.pl?wert=yamagoshi,+toshihiro&recnums=1328&index=1:&db=dachs.

57 Carl Crow, "President Wilson's Eyes and Ears [in China, 1918–19]," n.d., typewritten, fifteen pages, Carl Crow MSS, folder 48, Western Historical Manuscript Collection, University of Missouri Columbia; quoted from Schmidt, footnote 2; Reinsch, *An American Diplomat in China*, 61.

58 Wagner, "The Canonization of May Fourth," 82–95.

thought it could be applied to places without "civilized" state structures or to the colonies of allies. In view of the worldwide response, he anticipated—on the ship to Paris in 1919—that the avalanche he had set rolling might engulf him. In his *The Wilsonian Moment*, Erez Manela has drawn a fine portrait of the hopes awakened by Wilson's speeches among resistance and independence movements worldwide.[59]

There were close connections between the Betterment of China Group and the students in Peking and Shanghai, as well as the intellectuals who supported them and acted as their mentors. On the morning of May Fourth, student leaders went to the U.S. embassy in Peking to ask Reinsch's advice, but he was out of town. A few days later, Reinsch was active in pressing for the release of students who had been arrested at the demonstrations. Jiang Menglin, who had translated Wilson's speeches in Reinsch's team and was one of the recognized guides of the movement, became acting head of Peking University, and when he was forced out of town by the Peking militarists backing the government, the U.S. embassy helped him safely relocate to Shanghai. As the Japanese had effectively blocked cable services between Peking and Shanghai, Reinsch's embassy used its wireless to transmit the news about the Peking demonstrations to Shanghai, with the effect of the movement greatly expanding its geographic, social, and political reach as well as its impact.[60]

The connection between Hu Shih and George Sokolsky should be discussed here. Hu Shih's role as one of the intellectual leaders of the May Fourth Movement is well known. Sokolsky's role during China's Republican period has remained unstudied in part because his archive at Stanford's Hoover Institution was until recently closed, but mostly because his career as a right-wing anti-communist commentator during the McCarthy era made him a highly unappealing research subject for the generation of scholars entering Sinology in the post–Vietnam War era.[61] The archive is now open: it shows a young Sokolsky with a strong commitment to China's sovereignty and deep contacts in China, especially among Shanghai business and educational circles.

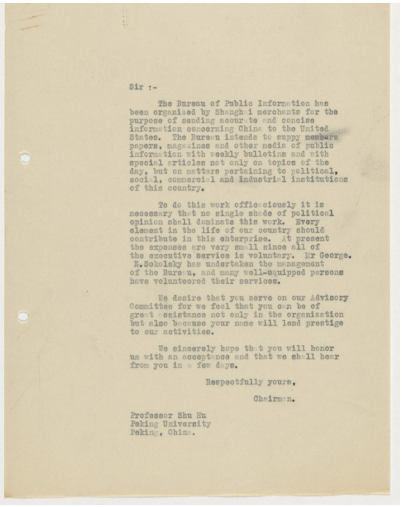
In May 1919, Sokolsky set up a Bureau of Public Information in Shanghai. Its purpose was to make available in the United States information and opinion from and about China to overcome the one-sided reporting of the Japanese

59 Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment*; Manela, "Imagining Woodrow Wilson in Asia: Dreams of East-West Harmony and the Revolt against Empire in 1919," *American Historical Review* (2006): 1327–1351.

60 Reinsch, *An American Diplomat In China*, 358–367.

61 Warren I. Cohen is the only author dealing with Sokolsky's activities during the Republican period. His approach is characterized by Sokolsky's later acquired notoriety; Cohen did not yet have access to the Sokolsky archive at the Hoover Institution at Stanford. See Warren I. Cohen, *The Chinese Connection: Roger S. Greene, Thomas W. Lamont, George E. Sokolsky and American-East Asian relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978).

Kokusai news agency. The chairman of this Shanghai branch was F. C. Tong (T'ang Chieh-chih 湯節之, n.d.), a Chinese banker with whom Sokolsky founded the *Shangbao*, *Shanghai Journal of Commerce*, in 1920. The manager of and spirit behind the enterprise was Sokolsky. Sokolsky asked Hu Shih to become a member of the advisory board of this bureau. Hu Shih's name at the time was not transcribed as Hu Suh, and he signed that way (Fig. 17). A look at the advisory board of this bureau shows student leaders, educators, and people from commerce and banking (Fig. 18). This list is important because it forms a profile of the kinds of people involved in the May Fourth Movement, especially as it spread to Shanghai. From Sokolsky's letter we know that the members of the advisory board were having regular meetings to discuss broad questions of strategy.[62] Sokolsky and Hu Shih began a very close friendship.



Sir :-

The Bureau of Public Information has been organised by Shanghai merchants for the purpose of sending accurate and genuine information concerning China to the United States. The Bureau intends to supply members papers, magazines and other media of public information with weekly bulletins and with special articles not only on topics of the day, but on matters pertaining to political, social, commercial and industrial institutions of this country.

To do this work efficiently it is necessary that no single shade of political opinion shall dominate this work. Every element in the life of our country should contribute in this enterprise. At present the expenses are very small since all of the executive service is voluntary. Mr George. E.Sokolsky has undertaken the management of the Bureau, and many well-equipped persons have volunteered their services.

We desire that you serve on our Advisory Committee for we feel that you can be of great assistance not only in the organization but also because your name will lend prestige to our activities.

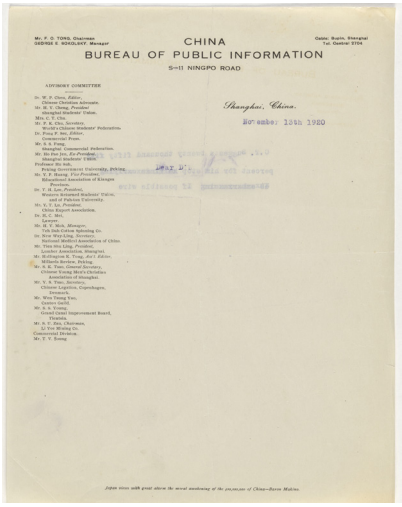
We sincerely hope that you will honor us with an acceptance and that we shall hear from you in a few days.

Respectfully yours,

Chairman.

Professor Shu Hu
Peking University
Peking, China.

Fig. 17. *Letter from China Bureau of Public Information in Shanghai to Suh Hu (Hu Shih), June 1919. Hoover Institution Library & Archives.*[63]



CHINA
BUREAU OF PUBLIC INFORMATION
5-11 NINGPO ROAD

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Shanghai, China.

November 12th 1920

Fig. 18. *Letterhead for China Bureau of Public Information and Advisory Committee. Hoover Institution Library & Archives.*[64]

62 George Sokolsky, *George Sokolsky Papers* (inclusive: 1916–1962), Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University, Collection Number: 59004.

63 Sokolsky, *George Sokolsky Papers,* box 64, folder 9.

64 Sokolsky, *George Sokolsky Papers*, box 43, folder 8.

The function of foreigners in the May Fourth Movement is clear. Mainly, they had wide connections within China. A look at the correspondence, articles, and careers of Reinsch, Crow, Anderson, Powell, Donald, Gilbert, and Sokolsky shows their deep contacts across the Chinese political and social spectrum. Their role was facilitated by the widespread familiarity with English among Chinese elite members, Anderson's fluency in Mandarin as well as several dialects,[65] also true to a lesser degree for Crow, Powell, and Sokolsky, and the constant exchange of information between them, often through coded telegrams.[66] They had, furthermore, extremely wide connections among other foreigners because they were all correspondents of foreign newspapers. They were able to advise the May Fourth protagonists on what the international effect of any action would be, help in formulating strategies, and disseminate supportive information internationally.[67] All of them except Reinsch (at this time) were writing articles in Chinese foreign-language newspapers and in the foreign press.

The accepted leader of this Betterment of China Group was Roy Scott Anderson, who is referred to in the internal correspondence by the codeword "the Admiral."[68] As Reinsch gratefully noted in his memoirs, Anderson introduced him to the intricacies of China's personal politics. "Mr. Anderson's knowledge of the Chinese, wide as the nation and specific as to the qualities of all its important men, enabled me to approach Chinese affairs concretely, personally, and to lay aside for the time any general and preconceived notions."[69] Using the pen name Bruce Baxter, Roy Scott Anderson wrote important opinion pieces

65 Roy Anderson had been born in China, as the son of a distinguished American missionary and the founder of Suzhou University. He had learned to speak Chinese before he could speak English. According to Carl Crow, "He had gone to school in the United States and had married an American girl, but he was always at heart a Chinese and thought like one." See Carl Crow, "The Most Interesting Character I Ever Knew," *China Rhyming: A Gallimaufry of Random China History and Research Interests,* February 24, 2011, accessed December 10, 2021, http://www.chinarhyming.com/2011/02/24/carl-crow-on-roy-anderson-the-most-interesting-man-i-ever-knew/. See also Paul French, *Through the Looking Glass: China's Foreign Journalists from Opium Wars to Mao* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2009), 122; Roy Scott Anderson, *Anderson (Roy Scott) Papers*, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University, Collection Number: 65008.

66 Some of these telegrams are in the *George Sokolsky Papers*, Collection Number: 59004.

67 For example, Roy Anderson, "China's Only Hope. Restoration of Peace by the Powers Without Consulting Peking or Canton," *North China Daily News*, May 6, 1919, 7; Bruce Baxter, "The Student Movement Possibility of An Anti-Foreign Propaganda," *The North China Herald*, May 17, 1919; Rodney Gilbert, "What the Students have Already Done for China," *The North China Herald*, January 31, 1920, 283. Sokolsky inspired many of the Shanghai organizations dealing with boycotts and strikes but also was the negotiator between the north and south governments in 1919–1920; see *George Sokolsky Papers*, Collection Number: 59004.

68 See letter from Donald to Sokolsky, September 21, 1920; Sokolsky letter to Donald, September 24, 1920; Donald letter to Sokolsky, October 12, 1920; Sokolsky letter to Donald, November 1, 1920; Sokolsky letter to Donald, November 13, 1920. In *George Sokolsky Papers*, Collection Number: 59004.

69 Reinsch, *An American Diplomat in China*, 13.

in the *North China Daily News*, such as advising students against expanding the boycott against Japanese goods to a boycott that would have included all businesses associated with the powers that had agreed to the Versailles Treaty. His essays were highly influential in directing strategies in Shanghai and Peking as the May Fourth Movement unfolded in 1919 and 1920.

To give a snapshot of such personal connections between foreign and Chinese May Fourth protagonists, Hu Shih and Sokolsky are good examples. He wrote under the assumed names of Georgi Gramada and George Soks in various papers in East Asia and the United States. Hu Shih and Sokolsky became very close friends. Sokolsky referred to Hu Shih in a letter to the U.S. banker Thomas Lamont as "the leader of intellectual China."[70] Hu Shih in his turn wrote about Sokolsky in his very flattering preface to Sokolsky's *Outline of Universal History* (Fig. 19), quoted earlier: "In 1919, he was aiding the student government."[71] This 1928 book was written to present world history from an East Asian perspective. Sokolsky wrote to Hu Shih about himself, "The student movement of '19, in which I had the honor to participate with an enthusiasm and a faithfulness to China equal to any Chinese."[72] The Hoover Institution archive preserves nearly a hundred letters between the two, written between 1919 and 1954 (Fig. 20 and Fig. 21). These letters, all of which deal with China's political situation, were often written in a very personal style. The two men called each other by their nicknames, and they socialized with each other's families. Sokolsky sent all the chapters of his *History* to Hu Shih for suggestions and corrections, and Hu Shih sent his writings in English to Sokolsky to improve the English before publication. Hu Shih wrote for Sokolsky's *Shangbao* newspaper, and Sokolsky advised Hu Shih about writing for *Time* magazine. Sokolsky was a key figure in the Shanghai May Fourth Movement as well as in the efforts to establish the foundations for a fully legitimized government for all of China. Quite a few of the manifestos of the assemblies of businessmen, educators, and politicians pushing for such a government were drafted by him, and he played a prominent role in the Chinese Chamber of Commerce.

In short, the Chinese and foreign protagonists of the May Fourth Movement acted like a transnational non-governmental organization that upheld Wilsonian ideals without feeling bound by the vicissitudes of U.S. politics.

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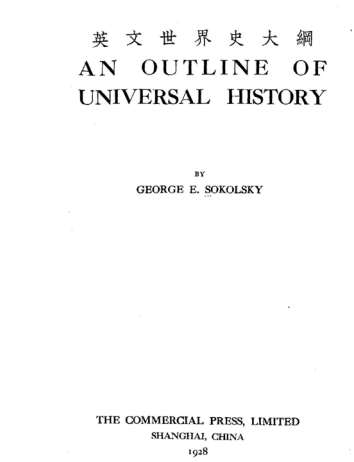
70 Sokolsky letter to Lamont, April 9, 1920, in *Thomas W. Lamont Papers, 1894–1948*, Baker Library Special Collections, Harvard University Business School, box 186.

71 Hu Shih, "Introduction."

72 Sokolsky letter to Hu Shih, June 8, 1925, in *George Sokolsky Papers* (under "Correspondence, 1916–1962"), letters arranged alphabetically by name of correspondent.


英文世界史大綱

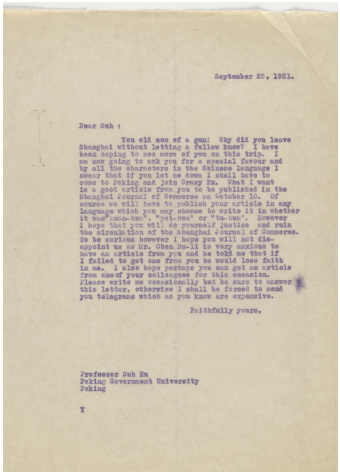
AN OUTLINE OF UNIVERSAL HISTORY

BY

GEORGE E. SOKOLSKY

THE COMMERCIAL PRESS, LIMITED
SHANGHAI, CHINA
1928

Fig. 19. *Cover of Sokolsky's* Outline of Universal History. *1928. Commercial Press.*


September 23, 1921.

Dear Suh :

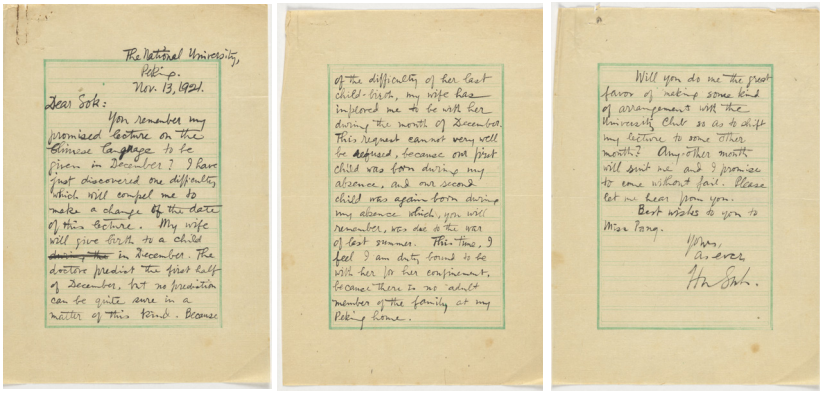
You old son of a gun! Why did you leave Shanghai without letting a fellow know? I have been hoping to see more of you on this trip. I am now going to ask you for a special favour and by all the characters in the Chinese language I swear that if you let me down I shall have to come to Peking and join Crosy Em. What I want is a good article from you to be published in the Shanghai Journal of Commerce on October 10. Of course we will have to publish your article in any language which you may choose to write it in whether it was "kuo-yu", "pai-hua" or "tu-hua". However I hope that you will do yourself justice and rain the circulation of the Shanghai Journal of Commerce. To be serious however I hope you will not disappoint me as Mr. Chen Bo-li is very anxious to have an article from you and he told me that if I failed to get one from you he would lose faith in us. I also hope perhaps you can get an article from one of your colleagues for this occasion. Please write me occasionally but be sure to answer this letter, otherwise I shall be forced to send you telegrams which as you know are expensive.

Faithfully yours,

Professor Suh Hu
Peking Government University
Peking

Y

Fig. 20. *Sokolsky letter to Hu Shih, September 23, 1921. Hoover Institution Library & Archives.* [73]


The National University,
Peking.
Nov. 13, 1921.

Dear Sok:

You remember my promised lecture on the Chinese language to be given in December? I have just discovered one difficulty which will compel me to make a change in the date of this lecture. My wife will give birth to a child ~~during that~~ in December. The doctors predict the first half of December, but no physician can be quite sure in a matter of this kind. Because of the difficulty of her last child-birth, my wife has implored me to be with her during the month of December. This request can not very well be refused, because our first child was born during my absence, and our second child who again born during my absence which, you will remember, was due at the end of last summer. This time, I feel I am duty bound to be with her for her confinement, because there is no adult member of the family at my Peking home.

Will you do me the great favor of making some kind of arrangement with the University Club so as to shift my lecture to some other month? Any other month will suit me and I promise to come without fail. Please let me hear from you.

Best wishes to you to Miss Pang.

Yours,
As ever,
Hu Shih.

Fig. 21. *Hu Shih letter to Sokolsky, November 13, 1921. Hoover Institution Library & Archives.*[74]

73 Sokolsky, *George Sokolsky Papers*, box 64, folder 9.

74 Sokolsky, *George Sokolsky Papers*, box 64, folder 9.

Challenge three: Talking to Thomas Lamont—Sovereignty and the International Banking Consortium of 1920

Thomas Lamont (Lamende 拉門德, 1870–1948) was a partner in the Morgan Bank in New York, at the time the most important U.S. investment bank (Fig. 22). He had represented this bank when the Chinese financial consortium, the New Consortium, was formed in 1908. Its purpose was to prevent loans to China for privileges by any of the powers and to secure financially viable debt services. It included banking groups from England, France, Italy, the U.S., and eventually Russia and Japan. It agreed on only one loan to be offered collectively to China by these countries. When Wilson became president in 1913, he refused government support for this consortium, assuming that the banks would be taking advantage of China. As a result, the consortium collapsed. Later, the Wilson administration decided to form a new bank consortium in 1916. This new consortium held the purpose of "assisting China in the development of her public enterprises,"[75] hoping to prevent privileged treatment in regard to the granting of international loans, especially when Japan could use these resources for actions against China. However, among the thirty-seven member-states in this New Consortium, Japan alone insisted on excluding Manchuria and Mongolia as a precondition for joining the consortium in order to protect its interests there. To try to persuade Japan to join, Lamont decided to go to East Asia in early 1920. It quickly turned out that he had two problems to solve: convincing the Japanese to join, and convincing the Chinese that this would be to their benefit because it would eliminate the backdoor financing of the troops controlled by various warlords and retainers financed by pro-Japanese political factions. Both were uphill battles.

Lamont had diplomatic experience as a member of Wilson's team for the Paris negotiations. He had connections with East Asia beyond banking circles through his private secretary, who had worked as a journalist in the Philippines and had knowledge of all the foreign correspondents in China. When news about Lamont's impending trip became public, he obtained a letter from the American journalist and publisher George Bronson Rea, who offered to organize the trip and arrange contacts for him.[76] Rea was owner and publisher of the *Far Eastern Review*, the main East Asian journal for the mining, building, and engineering industries. He had been in Paris to

75 Thomas W. Lamont, "Banking Consortium for China as a Power for Peace: New Plan Would Check Old Order of Special Spheres of Influence, a Hotbed of International Rivalries—Status of Japan's Reservations—Promise of Far Eastern Stability," *New York Times,* August 8, 1920, 83.

76 George Bronson Rea wrote many letters to Lamont and Lamont's secretary Mr. Egan, sending both men his book which advocated closer links with Japan; he further denounced the policy of the International Banking Consortium towards China and vigorously defended the interest of Japan's expansionist policy. These letters can be found in *Thomas W. Lamont Papers,* box 186

cover the negotiations and had accepted a sizeable Japanese financial offer to switch his rather critical attitude toward Japanese strategies in China to one of support.[77] Years later he became an advisor lobbying on behalf of Manchukuo in Washington, the puppet state set up by Japan in Manchuria. Without knowledge of Rea's offer, Sokolsky also wrote to Lamont. Even though this letter was basically a criticism of an article Lamont had written, Lamont developed a very close connection with Sokolsky. In the end, it was Sokolsky who prepared Lamont's contacts in China. From then on, the archive at Harvard shows Lamont's evolving correspondence with other members of the Betterment of China group, namely Millard, Anderson, and Carl Crow, while there was no further communication with Bronson Rea. This can be read as a political stance to engage with this group rather than with advocates of Japanese interests of Chinese political factions.

Fig. 22. *Thomas Lamont on the cover of* Time Magazine*, November 11, 1929.* Time Magazine.

In Shanghai, Sokolsky had arranged for Lamont to meet with a broad spectrum of political forces, from Sun Yat-sen to various warlords to bankers. But Sokolsky also set up a meeting with the student federation. There is a wonderful eyewitness account of this meeting in the American magazine *The World's Work*.[78] In public statements and private discussions in China, Lamont

77 Selle, *Donald of China*, 217–220.

78 First published in 1900 by Walter Hines Page, then a partner in the publishing firm of Doubleday Page, this magazine would be absorbed by *The Review of Reviews* in 1932. Jesse Lynch Williams, "How T. W. Lamont Got the Consortium Formed. The Dawn of a New Day in the Orient, With an End to Japanese Aggressions and Other Foreign Spheres of Influence. Some New Ideas on the Proper Way of Dealing with the Oriental," *World's Work* (1921): 452–464.

emphasized the need for a legitimate central Chinese government with a central war ministry in charge of controlling and shrinking the many different armies. He also stressed the need for securities so that banks would be able to sell bonds to the international public. That meant establishing some sort of control over the government's handling of its finances. The student federation was strongly opposed to the consortium, believing that it was an international plot to monopolize credit in China, to establish international control over China's finances, and to bring in Japan to share the spoils.[79]

When Lamont came to Shanghai, rumors circulated that the students were going to stone his hotel. Being a skillful diplomat, he did not ask for police protection but invited representatives of the student federation for tea. Thirty of them came, ten of them women, and he received them with his wife and staff present. He argued that including Japan in the consortium would prevent Japan from making loans to various government figures outside of the consortium's rules, an aspect of control that was in the Chinese interest. He also made it clear that loans would only be made to the government for well-planned infrastructure projects, and that they would not compete with private loans for businesses. However, because the bonds had to be sold in the international market, investors needed security, otherwise the bonds would find no buyers. At the end of a heated discussion that lasted more than two hours, he managed to convince the students that his points were valid. The fact that Lamont had this discussion with the students in Shanghai seems to have prompted the Peking government to release some of the students who had been previously arrested for organizing and joining protests.[80]

Lamont then traveled to Peking. Sokolsky suggested to Lamont and wrote to Hu Shih that they should meet.[81] Among the many meetings Lamont had in Peking, which included the country's president, the prime minister, and various other ministers, he had a long meeting with Hu Shih and representatives of the student federation. The meeting with Lamont is noted in the Hu Shih diary, where Hu Shih writes on the side: "We had a very long talk. Went with student representatives."[82] The students had already become a force in public opinion that might represent the future of the country and

79 Thomas W. Lamont, *Across World Frontiers* (New York: Harcourt & Brace, 1951), 238–239; Jesse Lynch Williams, "How T. W. Lamont Got the Consortium Formed," *World's Work* (1921): 454–458. Some Chinese students studying in the U.S. also expressed their unease about the consortium: see, for example, the entire issue of *The Chinese Students' Monthly* 16, no. 5 (1920), which is devoted to the subject, with articles such as "Why the Chinese People Object to the Loans from the Consortium" (330–331) reflecting the general sentiment of mistrust.

80 Lamont, *Across World Frontiers*, 239.

81 Sokolsky letter to Lamont, April 9, 1920, in *Thomas W. Lamont Papers,* box 186.

82 Hu Shih 胡適, *Hu Shi riji quanji* 胡適日記全集 [Hu Shih's diary collection, 1891–1962] (Taipei: Lianjing Chuban Gongsi, 2004), 684–685.

therefore deserved international attention. Hu Shih concluded, "we had a long talk. What he [Lamont] was saying made me very depressed."[83] Obviously, Lamont's meetings with the high officials had convinced him that there was little hope for a quick improvement in the legitimacy and quality of China's governance. Here we have a situation in which Lamont came to China and managed, with the help of these foreigners and others like Hu Shih, to reverse the opinion of Young China about the consortium even while the Japanese-controlled newspapers in China were spreading thick webs of misinformation. Though for the time being there was no government in China able to give the securities to make any bonds financially viable and no credits were given, the establishment of the consortium changed the political dynamic in China by depriving various factions and forces of their foreign funding. When Lamont returned to the United States after having secured Japan's entry into the consortium without conditions, many of the Chinese student unions at various American universities invited him to give speeches with very flattering letters, an indication of the effectiveness of his diplomatic efforts.[84] A few months later, Lamont organized a huge relief effort for the North China famine, an indication that he shared a commitment to the betterment of China.[85]

The opposition to the consortium was a direct derivative of the two pillars of the political side of the May Fourth Movement: sovereignty, and the assessment that Japan was the main threat. The cooperation of foreign and Chinese May Fourth protagonists created the conditions for face-to-face encounters as well as for the dissemination of Lamont's statements in the press for a deeper and more sophisticated understanding of the issues at stake and the acceptance of a strategy that on the surface looked to many like old-style imperialist policy.

Challenge four: Derailing the ratification of the Paris Treaty by the U.S. Senate, 1921

For an explanation of the next two challenges, we can rely on the brilliant documentation offered in Mordechai Rozanski's 1974 PhD dissertation at the University of Pennsylvania.[86] Challenge four was the ratification of the

83 Hu Shih, *Hu Shi riji quanji*, 685.

84 Letter of invitation from Chinese Students Club, Columbia University, December 11, 1920, "… seek chance to express respect to the founder of the great Consortium and the profound promoter of international well-being … Club initiated famine relief fund two months ago ... are honored beyond measure that leading Americans, under your guidance, will launch national drive." *Thomas W. Lamont Papers,* box 186.

85 See Andrew James Nathan, *A History of the China International Famine Relief Commission* (Cambridge, MA: East Asian Research Center, Harvard University, 1965).

86 Rozanski, "The Role of American Journalists."

Paris Treaty by the United States. On this and the next two challenges we also have good archive-based studies by Albert E. Kane, Paul French, Warren I. Cohen, and others.[87] As is well known, the United States did not join the League of Nations. But the U.S. Senate also refused to ratify the rest of the Paris Agreement. Such a refusal kept the door open for future negotiations concerning Shandong. Charles Crane, Reinsch's successor as U.S. ambassador to China, was firmly convinced that the only way to prevent the Shandong clause from becoming accepted was to derail ratification of the entire Paris Agreement. The chances were good, because there was already strong opposition against Wilson in the Senate. Crane was a wealthy heir, and he hired Thomas Millard to go to the United States to orchestrate a media campaign to sink the agreement.[88]

Millard spent weeks in the United States going public with interviews, pamphlets, and memoranda to undermine the signing of the Paris Treaty, arguing that the Shandong clause was unacceptable to the Chinese and that it was against principle. In a combination of anti-Wilson sentiment in the Senate and the persuasive rationale Millard provided, the entire treaty was turned down. A year later, the United States concluded a separate peace treaty with Germany to end the war. This opened the way for the United States to return to the Shandong question. Sinking the treaty altogether, including the League of Nations, was bitter for many Americans, but it was a breakthrough for China.

In this case generally, Crane and Millard made effective use of the media, but on this crucial point there was practically no Chinese involvement. One would have thought that just two years after the beginning of the May Fourth Movement, this issue would have been of the greatest urgency for forces in the Chinese government and society who were committed to self-determination. But this crucial development was largely overlooked by the Chinese press and public opinion. The agency, in pushing for the May Fourth agenda there, was completely in the hands of foreigners.

Challenge five: Derailing the renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1921

The Anglo-Japanese Alliance was formed in 1902. It came up for renewal in 1922, for which negotiations began in 1921. In this alliance, Great Britain and Japan recognized each other as the dominant sea powers in their respective spheres. A continuation of this alliance would mean that the United Kingdom would remain on the sidelines for the question of Japan's role in China,

87 Albert E. Kane, *China, Power and the Washington Conference* (Shanghai: The Commercial Press. 1937); French, *Carl Crow—A Tough Old China Hand*; Cohen, *The Chinese Connection.*

88 Rozanski, "The Role of American Journalists," 282–293.

supported by its own interests to keep extraterritoriality for its citizens. The alliance contained an important clause, which proved to be its weak point: If Japan or Great Britain became involved in a war, they would be supported by the other party. In the case of a war between Japan and the U.S., which was increasingly considered to be a possibility, the former British colonies, such as Canada and Australia, which were now independent states but still bound by treaties to support the UK, would be drawn into a war with the United States. Crane went into action again.

In this case, he negotiated his strategy with Wellington Koo (Koo Vi Kyuin/Gu Weijun 顧維鈞, 1887–1985) in the Chinese Foreign Ministry as well as with other figures, and he hired a professional propagandist named Lennox Simpson (Patenan Weier 帕特南.威爾, 1877–1930) who wrote under the name of Putnam Weale (Fig. 23). Simpson was British, which helped the situation, and he went to work in London during a Commonwealth conference where the issue was to be discussed.[89]

Fig. 23. *Lennox Simpson. 1907. Photo.* The Bookman.[90]

Assuming that the British were pushing for a renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, he focused on the dominions—the Canadians, the Australians, and so on. His argument was, in the case that there is a war between Japan and the United States, which appeared to be on the horizon, does Britain really want to get involved in a war against the United States?[91] Both the Canadians and the Australians abhorred the idea, and told the British that they would not be part of it. A way out was offered by U.S. President Warren G. Harding, who

89 Rozanski, "The Role of American Journalists," 343–344.

90 *The Bookman* 25, no. 8 (1907): 569.

91 Rozanski, "The Role of American Journalists," 343.

proposed to convene a conference to stop the arms race in the Pacific, which had already begun, and essentially freeze the fleets and naval facilities at present levels. This looked like an acceptable multilateral instead of bilateral solution, especially since it would include the U.S., which had emerged as the dominant power after World War I. Although in this case some officials in the Chinese foreign ministry had been consulted, the original planning and the actual execution of the strategy to prevent a renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was developed by Crane, probably in consultation with Millard and Anderson, and executed by Putnam Weale's skillful propaganda campaign among the dominion leaders.

Challenge six: Recovering Shandong at the Washington Naval Conference 1922

The main point of the Washington Naval Conference in late 1921 and early 1922 was to establish an arms freeze agreed upon by the Great Powers. The agreement would not allow Japan to develop large-scale naval installations in the Pacific, which would have cut American supply and communication lines with the Far East. Shandong, however, was not on the agenda. The Chinese were invited to the conference as a minor power, and a system was established in which they would negotiate about Shandong in parallel with the Japanese. China's standing at this time was at its lowest. A few days before the conference started, China defaulted on a loan, and the Peking government was in turmoil during the conference. The American government had strongly suggested that the Chinese delegation should represent the entire country, not just the north or the south,[92] and Anderson, Sokolsky, and Donald pushed—without success—for the selection of "people's representatives," rather than representatives of the different factions.[93] In the end, no agreement between north and south was found, and both sent their own delegations. The Peking group, however, was officially recognized in Washington, while the Canton representatives attacked them with leaflets, pamphlets, and lobbying. When the Peking government seemed unable to come up with the funds for the delegation's travel to Washington, DC, Millard wrote to Lamont suggesting that the Morgan Bank should cover their expenses. Lamont rejected the idea.[94] The Betterment of China Group was frustrated with what it saw as a growing and undifferentiated

92 During the 1920s, until the KMT unified China in 1927, Northern China was dominated by different warlord factions, and Southern China by political and military forces loyal to Sun Yat-sen and his KMT party.

93 Sokolsky letter to Donald, October 12, 1920; "Interview with Anderson for Publication in *The Journal of Commerce*. Shanghai, August 15, 1921," both in *George Sokolsky Papers*, Collection Number: 59004.

94 Lamont letter to Millard, August 5, 1921, in *Thomas W. Lamont Papers,* box 186.

anti-foreign sentiment among the students as well as a growing interest in "trivia" among the students, such as sexual liberation, while there was no public interest in China on the question of what would happen with Shandong. Sokolsky wrote to Donald that it might be time for them to "start the student movement again."[95] He also wrote to Lamont that if he found any evidence that the Chinese delegation had given in to Japanese demands, a confidential telegram would be most welcome, because it was such a telegram that had sparked the 1919 demonstrations.[96] Sokolsky organized some demonstrations in Shanghai to push for the Chinese demands in Washington, but they found little of same elsewhere in China.[97]

All the Peking delegates in Washington, however—Wellington Koo from the Foreign Ministry, Wang Chonghui 王寵惠 (1881–1958), a lawyer in the International Court of Justice, and Alfred Sao-ke Sze (Shi Zhaoji 施肇基, 1877–1958)—had been part of the group negotiating for China in Paris and then did not sign the Paris Agreement. Although they had little public support from home, they put the Japanese on the defensive by laying down a number of principles that should be accepted by all of the parties. When the negotiations with Japan went nowhere, U.S. Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes and British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour pushed hard, with the effect that the Japanese agreed to return Shandong to full Chinese control.[98] The principle of the extraterritoriality of foreigners, however, which the Chinese delegation also wished to see abolished, remained untouched, because there was a consensus among the powers that in its chaotic political situation China was not able to guarantee fair trials and due process. The return of Shandong, which had sparked the May Fourth demonstrations just a short time previously, was greeted in China with disinterest, to the consternation of the Betterment of China group.

Because the United States had not ratified the Paris Agreement, its representatives were free to push for the return of Shandong, because the Japanese had gone far beyond the Paris Agreement in establishing their control in Shandong. Notwithstanding all the efforts of Sokolsky and others, there was very little public pressure in China for the return of Shandong. However, the Chinese delegates proved to be skillful diplomats who made good use of the

95 Sokolsky letter to Donald, May 25, 1921; Donald letter to Sokolsky, May 27, 1921, Sokolsky letter to Donald; these letters are in *George Sokolsky Papers*, Collection Number: 59004.

96 Sokolsky letter to Lamont, August 4, 1921, and on September 1, 1921; both letters are in *George Sokolsky Papers*, Collection Number: 59004.

97 Sokolsky to Donald, Sokolsky letter to Donald, October 15, 1921 [corrected date: October 25], in *George Sokolsky Papers*, Collection Number: 59004.

98 G. Zay Wood, *The Shantung Question: A Study in Diplomacy and World Politics* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1922), 239–240.

increasing nervousness about Japan's big-power aspirations among the other powers, while upholding Wilsonian principles. In their key memorandum, a number of passages imply a knowledge of U.S. (as opposed to British) law, which led people to suggest that Reinsch, Anderson, or Millard had a hand in drafting it. Such suggestions were eagerly taken up by the Japanese delegates and flatly denied by their Chinese counterparts.

Challenge seven: Staying on course—the American Information Committee

Some key members in the Betterment of China Group remained committed to the cause of defending China against the Japanese, notwithstanding all their frustrations with China. When Japan's territorial ambitions in China returned in force after the early 1930s, the American Information Committee was set up by the betterment of China group, with Crow, Powell, and Donald actively participating. It published and widely disseminated a series of pamphlets criticizing Japan (Fig. 24). One will find them in all major U.S. libraries where they had been sent free of charge. In a way a continuation of Sokolsky's China Information Committee, this committee consisted only of Americans; its main purpose was to rouse public opinion against Japan, especially in the United States, but also among foreigners in China, and in this way to counter the strenuous and well-financed Japanese efforts to draw the U.S. to its side. The address of this committee was 160 Avenue Edward VII in Shanghai—the address of Carl Crow's advertising agency.

Carl Crow, of course, had been head of the China branch of the Committee on Public Information in earlier years. We do not know the names of the other activists in this group, but we know that other members of the Betterment of China Group continued on their old track. Donald ended up as Madame Chiang Kai-shek's private secretary and was instrumental in recruiting Tong Xianguang, also known as Hollington Tong 董顯光 (1887–1971), diplomat and American-educated newspaper man, to run a KMT propaganda agency primarily targeting American audiences.[99] The American journalist John B. Powell was among the foreigners working for this agency. Both men paid a price, making it into the Japanese most-wanted list. Donald was detained in Indonesia by Japanese forces, but they never realized who he was, and he left the camp at the war's end with terminal cancer, while Powell was

99 Selle, *Donald of China*, 367; Shuge Wei, "News as a Weapon: Hollington Tong and the Formation of the Guomindang Centralized Foreign Propaganda System, 1937–1938," *Twentieth-Century China* 39, no. 2 (2014): 118–143. Tong had graduated from the first class of the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism in 1913.

identified, arrested, and interned in Shanghai, and returned after the war with both feet amputated.[100]

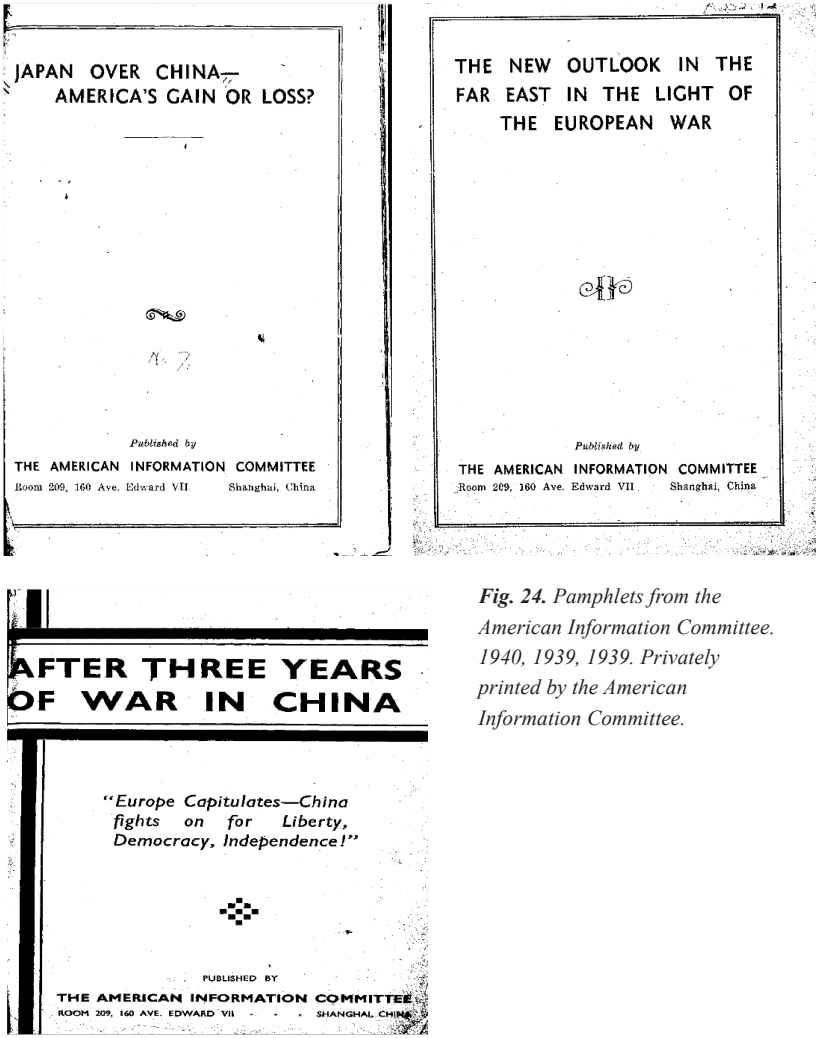


Fig. 24. *Pamphlets from the American Information Committee. 1940, 1939, 1939. Privately printed by the American Information Committee.*

100 Selle, *Donald of China*, 350–368; "Yun Gee's Portrait of Journalist John B. Powell," *School of Journalism Bulletin*, Series 94, *University of Missouri Bulletin* 45, no. 10 (1944).

Conclusions

If we define the May Fourth political agenda as self-determination for China and a struggle against Japan's gaining of control over China, we see strong involvement from a group of foreigners who were committed to Chinese interests rather than their own country's shifting policies.

The May Fourth Movement consciously acted as part of the international political ideological current in both the cultural and political realms. Politically, it shared with this cultural current an idealized version of Wilsonism as a way to sovereignty, democracy, and peace. The understanding was that propaganda in the local and international public sphere, through writings, actions, and so on, was crucial for the national interest, in preventing the dark deals of secret diplomacy.

The movement had to compensate for a strong asymmetry in the means of communication, information, and propaganda available to Japan and the Western powers. It overcame this asymmetry by relying on foreign participants who were sympathetic to its goals, participants who were nationally and internationally informed and connected and active in media communications. These foreigners were integral to and accepted within this movement. They provided guidance, information, and disseminated international propaganda. They made use of all official U.S. support available, and continued their assistance if that support was not forthcoming.

The Chinese political and social leaders and the foreigners sympathetic to this movement were aware that the country was dependent on foreign support for the defense of its territorial integrity and for its economic development. They made great efforts to convince primarily the American public that such support, rather than siding with Japan, coincided with vital U.S. economic and security interests. China was able to retain the often very emotional commitment of many of these foreigners over time, even though some foreigners left in frustration and some crossed over to the Japanese side.

The legitimacy given to propaganda by the lofty aims of sovereignty, democracy, and peace came at a price: the means of propaganda as an argumentative genre itself was not questioned in China. Propaganda elements came to be—and continue to be—pervasive in Chinese literature, arts, and scholarship, and are to this day considered as self-legitimate forms of articulation.