

Document 8.5: Excerpts from “My View on Marxism,” by Li Dazhao, in *Xin Qingnian* (*New Youth* magazine), May 1919

New Youth, founded by Chen Duxiu (see A Closer Look at the end of Chapter 8) was the most influential journal of the Republican era. The purpose of the journal, Chen wrote, was to “prove to the world that the old China is not dead, but that a new youthful China is in the process of being born.”¹

A German once said that if a person under fifty says that he understands Marxism, he must be boasting, because Marx’s books are complicated and his schools of thought are intricate. His *On Capitalism* has three volumes with a total of 2,135 pages. The first volume was published during Marx’s lifetime, but the second and the third volumes were published by his friend Engels after Marx died. As a result, it is inevitable that there are contradictions among the three volumes, which makes it harder to understand a book that is complicated to begin with. In addition, he left behind many works that are yet to be published. Even if one spends half a lifetime on Marxism, all one can achieve is probably to understand the main theories in his published works. Even that does not qualify as “understanding Marxism” completely.

I have not done much research on Marxism; therefore it is bold of me to attempt to talk about Marxism here. However, ever since the Russian Revolution, Marxism is about to sweep through the world. Countries such as Germany, Austria, and Hungary started their revolutions one after another following Marxist ideology. While Marxism has caught people’s attention around the world and has stirred up great changes, it also has generated many misunderstandings and misinterpretations.

Although our study of Marxism [at *New Youth*] is slight, there has been a great deal of interest in, and criticism of, his works in various countries as a result of the 100th anniversary [of Marx’s birth] in 1918. We have collected and edited these writings to

¹ Li Dazhao, “Youth,” *Xin Qingnian*, April 1918, 14. Qtd. in Benjamin Schwartz, *Chinese Communism and the Rise of Mao* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961) 12.

introduce them to our readers in this Marxism edition of *New Youth* magazine. I believe it is not without benefit for readers to gain some insight into this world-altering theory through our discussions. If there are any errors due to the editors' limited knowledge of Marxism, we hope our dear readers will offer their corrections.

Source: Li Dazhao, "My View on Marxism Part 1 of 2," *Xin Qingnian* May 1919: 521–537. Trans. Nan Ye.