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Research Article

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The Potentials and Occlusions of Zhonghua Minguo/Taiwan: In Search of a Left Nationalism in the Tsai Ing-wen Era

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Abstract: Tsai Ing-wen has consistently referred to the nation that she governs as 中華民國台灣 (The Republic of China Taiwan), the term representing a major rhetorical feature of her administration. Breaking from the exclusively Taiwan-centered discourse which traditionally defined DPP politics, Tsai has seemingly created an entirely new name for the state she governs. This article examines both the discursive potentials, but also the occlusions, of this newly coined neologism. It argues that the term is defined by a lack of materialist critique, in which essential questions regarding labor exploitation and private property regimes remain unaddressed. While Tsai has successfully combined the ROC's old Cold War raison d'etre (Chinese humanism as anti-Communism) with the Taiwanese independence movement's desire for global recognition through the nation-state form, what has been lost is any real commitment to a politics of working-class empowerment, which is reflected in the Tsai administration's abandonment of progressive labor law reform in 2018, as well as increasing trade liberalization policies with the US introduced in 2020. Returning to the roots of Taiwanese socialist discourse, this article will examine the possibility that "ROC-Taiwan" as a political project could still have a socialist future, despite its markedly capitalist past and present.

Keywords: ROC-Taiwan, Tsai Ing-Wen, Taiwanese socialism, materialist critique, loyalism, nativism, Xie Xuehong, Yang Rur-bin

Prologue: Two Old Terms, A Newly Urgent Fusion

In the 2020 presidential campaign and after, Tsai Ing-wen consistently referred to the nation that she was vying to be the president of 中華民國台灣 (The Republic of China Taiwan).¹ As Tsai puts it in an interview with the BBC which aired the day following her election victory, "We don't have a need to declare ourselves an independent state, we *are* an independent country already, we call ourselves Republic of China, Taiwan. We do have a government, the military, and we have elections."² Breaking from the exclusively Taiwan-centered, *anti*-Republic of China (ROC) discourse which traditionally defined the Democratic Progressive Party (民進黨, DPP) which she heads, Tsai has seemingly created an entirely new name for the state she governs, a feat of discursive invention that lays at the heart of the current Taiwanese government's

¹ See Zhou (2019); Huang et al. (2019); Zeng (2020).

² Quoted in Office of the President, Republic of China (Taiwan) (2020). Also reported in Sudworth (2020).

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approach to questions of identity and belonging on the island. This article examines both the discursive potentials, but also the occlusions, of this newly coined neologism, which is at once an effort to foreground Taiwan as a national project, while recognizing that any institutional expression regarding the island in the world must be made through the current state structure that Taiwan possesses, no matter the fascistic state apparatuses and authoritarian ideology associated with the state before 1949 on the Mainland (Clinton 1–22) and after in Taiwan (Chen Kuan-hsing, 5–13).

In terms of its discursive potential, the ROC-Taiwan neologism is an attempt at fusing together the historical experiences of two major affective structures that define life in Taiwan: a nativist vision that understands the Taiwanese people as a discrete ethnic-national people with their own right, one whose languages, historical experiences, and collective identities are decidedly island centered, refusing to be integrated into the larger overall cultural and political category China; and the other, a pan-Chinese vision which is grounded in a loyalist vision of deep sympathy with the Republic of China as a Chinese state in exile, a state that has supposedly managed to combine the best of Euro-American political models (liberal democracy) while retaining traditional Chinese pedagogy and moral-spiritual cultivation (Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism as living traditions of thought and practice).3 I understand affect in the terms articulated by Brian Massumi in his introduction to Deleuze and Guattari's A Thousand Plateaus as "an ability to affect and be affected...implying an augmentation or diminution in that body's capacity to act" (quoted in Bao, 384). In her history of spectatorial media practices in Nationalist China, Weihong Bao has a deepened affect theory by highlighting how the body's affective propulsion is not "something intrinsic to a private individual" (Bao, 6), but something "engineered as a sharable social experience through media technologies and their aesthetic interplay...shaping public perception and experience" (Bao, 6–7). Building of this work, I see both the nativist and loyalist positions in Taiwan as *affective* structures in that they exist as powerful assemblages of oral history, academic analysis, literary, filmic, journalistic, and theatrical representation, photography, legal testimony, public monuments and memorial spaces, state pedagogical curricula, among other discursive technologies, which work collectively to produce "a mediating environment" (Bao, 7) that propels emotional, psychological, and physical investment in one or the other narrative. 4 Tsai's neologism represents an attempt at coalition building of an ambitious kind, working between these two affective structures to assert (in an echo of the now famous sentence of The Good Friday Agreement that provided a framework for ending The Troubles in Northern Island) that one can be Taiwanese (possessing an island-centered political and cultural vision), ROC Chinese (possessing an intense loyalism to the Republic as a Chinese historical project), or both.5

³ For an example of such nativist thinking, see Tzeng (2011) and Peng (2017). For an overview of the development of Taiwanese nationalism over the course of the twentieth century, see Hsiau (2000). For an elegant recent articulation of the loyalist ROC position, see Yang (2015) as well as Yang (forthcoming). For an historical analysis of the origins of these two affective structures, see Chen (2010, 5–13, 55–60) and Huang (2012).

⁴ Literature, film, poetry, historical narrative, and digital media have all been powerful mediums for generating nativist affect. For example, Chen Fangming's two-volume New Taiwan Literary History (新台灣文學史) provides a history of the island's literature written from a Taiwanese nationalist perspective, which sees Taiwanese letters as an aesthetic experience embodying the drive for self-determination of the island's peoples (Chen, 2011). For a history of Taiwanese poetry seen in nationalist terms, see Tzeng (2005). Increasingly, digital media platforms such as YouTube have become potent spectatorial forces for Taiwanese nationalism. For example, the widely followed and politically influential content producer Kuan Chang released a music video before the 2020 presidential elections entitled "Taiwan Spirit" (台灣魂), whose major refrain was "My motherland is Taiwan" (我的祖國是台灣, Cai, 2020). Of course, the ROC state during the martial law period in Taiwan resorted to various aesthetic forms to generate support for the regime and influence public perception, from monumental architecture to anticommunist literature to state educational curricula. For the aesthetics of ROC martial law rule seen from the perspective of 1950s anticommunist novels, see Chen (2010).

⁵ The full wording of the sentence from the Good Friday Agreement is: "[the participants in the agreement] recognise the birthright of all the people of Northern Ireland to identify themselves and be accepted as Irish or British, or both, as they may so choose, and accordingly confirm that their right to hold both British and Irish citizenship is accepted by both Governments and would not be affected by any future change in the status of Northern Ireland." For a copy of the Good Friday Agreement, also known as the Belfast Agreement, see Government of the United Kingdom (1998). For an informative analysis regarding how cross-community pluralism was the core discursive breakthrough presented by the agreement, see O'Toole (2019). Tsai

It is, on one level, an elegant solution to the question of collective identity on the island, asserting (in a productively dialectical reversal) that Taiwanese history *is* ROC history, or that the ROC's history can only realize itself on the island of Taiwan. What were once stark opponents now seem to have become sublated into some new collective entity at a different stage of its history. Here, one recalls Frederic Jameson's famous dictum about the nature of dialectical movements in history: "The basic story which the dialectic has to tell is no doubt that of the dialectical reversal, that paradoxical turning around of a phenomenon into its opposite...a kind of leap-frogging affair in time, in which the drawbacks of a given historical situation turn out in reality to be its secret advantages" (309). Perhaps no better summation could be found of the theoretical reversals that accompany the ROC-Taiwan formulation, in which a political party (the DDP) who for so long fought for the abolishment of the ROC on Taiwan has now all of a sudden become the most ardent of ROC nationalists, and where the drawbacks of having the ROC state imposed on the Taiwanese people suddenly seem to have turned out to be something of a historical advantage after all, providing a ready-made state structure which Taiwanese nationalists can alter as they wish on their road to international recognition.

Yet for all of its pluralizing potentials, this article will argue that the discourse around ROC-Taiwan is defined by a lack of materialist critique, in which essential questions regarding labor exploitation and regimes of private property remain unaddressed. While Tsai has successfully combined the ROC's old Cold War raison d'etre (Chinese humanism as anti-Communism) with the Taiwanese independence movement's desire for global recognition through the nation-state form (Taiwan as the unfinished national project), what remains absent is any real commitment to a politics of working-class empowerment, which is reflected in the Tsai administration's abandonment of progressive labor legislation in 2018, and her support for Taiwan's increasing integration into the commodity circuits of American capitalism though a liberalization of pork trade announced in 2020. Indeed, this article will argue that the ROC and Taiwanese nationalist positions can be combined with such ease because historically each has possessed deeply anticommunist (and particularly anti-CCP) currents, however differentially expressed. This article will provide a close reading of the founding 1928 charter of the Taiwanese Communist Party (TCP) to suggest how such a materialist analytic can be re-incorporated into contemporary discussions concerning ROC-Taiwan. For it is only re-imputing a materialist problematic back into the ROC-Taiwan discourse that not just an integrative politics can be fostered on the island, but a materially just one as well.

Tsai Ing-wen, Yang Rur-bin and the Potentials of *ROC-Taiwan* as Ground for Island Pluralism

While Tsai Ing-wen has served as a president of the ROC since 2016, it was not until a speech she gave during the 2019 national day celebration that she publicly expressed the ROC-Taiwan formulation, doing so as a way of highlighting the shared collective experience of the people of the island, regardless of what political positions or historical narratives they hold to. As Tsai puts it, the ROC as a state structure had existed in Taiwan for over 70 years, and the people of the island had gone through a tremendous set of challenges, from the 823 military confrontation between the ROC and PRC across the waters of Jinmen in 1958, the expulsion of the ROC from the United Nations in 1971, the 1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis, the massive earthquake in Nantou that ripped across the island in 1999, among many others. President Tsai boldly declared that:

integrated pluralism as a key feature of her administration early after her first election victory for the president in 2016, when she now famously declared that "as long as I am president, I will work hard [to ensure] that nobody has to apologize for their identity." See Tu (2016) for more.

In facing every challenge, not only were we not defeated, we were made stronger, firmer...we have collectively undergone this journey, and regardless of political persuasion, the people who live on this land cannot be separated in opposition to one another. The Republic of China is not the monopoly of any one single entity, nor can Taiwan be solely occupied by any single entity...the six characters represented by Republic of China Taiwan are not blue, nor are they green, but rather represents the broadest possible social consensus within the entire society. (Zhou, 2019)

Tsai's broad faith in the experience of the ROC on Taiwan formed a marked contrast from her earlier discussions of the republic. For example, speaking in 2010 in her role as chairman of the DPP, she labeled the ROC a "lost government" (流亡政府), one whose state structure need not be accepted by the Taiwanese people (Li, 2010). Her 2019 re-appraisal of the meaning of the ROC came with an important temporal caveat, however. In the remarks above, the ROC's history is confined to the seventy some odd years that it has existed on the island of Taiwan, with the pre-1949 experience of the state on the Mainland absent from historical reflection all together. This is a critical ideological maneuver, for it strips the ROC of its pan-Chinese historical roots as the first Chinese republic, positioning it exclusively within the currents of Taiwan's island-centered history. Since Tsai's October 2019 speech, the ROC-Taiwan neologism has become an important discursive feature of her administration, appearing in her public speeches, her individual Facebook posts, as well as the official pronouncements of the ROC's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, particularly in their replies to PRC assertions of sovereignty over the island.⁶

While the Tsai administration has given the ROC-Taiwan moniker an unprecedented level of official visibility, different variations on the complex interrelationship between the ROC and the island of Taiwan have been a prominent feature of the private and public rhetorical maneuvering of previous political administrations, dating as far back as the 1950s. For example, according to the historian Wang Hao, an examination of the private manuscripts of Chiang Kai-shek from the 1950s reveals that he at that time already understood that the ROC framework could only "offer an outer shell" (借殼) for a country whose content had to be constructed on the island of Taiwan itself. In 1991, the ROC government under the Lee Teng-hui administration passed The Additional Articles to the original 1947 constitution, providing a legal framework for restricting the ROC's effective jurisdiction to Taiwan, Jinmen, Mazu, Penghu, and the outer islands (Chiang, 131–178). Finally, Lee Teng-hui famously claimed in 1999 that a state-to-state relationship existed between Taiwan and the PRC, utilizing the prestige and authority of the ROC presidential office to further a national, island-centered narrative (Chiang, 131–178).

Domestically, as Taiwanese intellectuals have wrestled with the question of the island's future as it enters the second term of the Tsai administration, the notion that the ROC and Taiwan have become fused into a single collective historical entity has garnered an important place in recent academic debate. The thinker in Taiwan who has done the most to provide a historical articulation of how this fusing occurred, and its implications for intellectual work on the island, is Yang Rur-bin, a famed Sinologist working in the New Confucian tradition spearheaded by such post-war Confucians in exile as Mou Zongsan, Tang Junyi, Xu Fuguan, and others. In 2015, Yang wrote the provocatively titled In Praise of 1949 (1949 禮讚), which put forth the argument that, despite the violence that defined the early years of GMD rule in Taiwan, the 1949 cataclysm actually provided an unprecedented opportunity for both Taiwan and the ROC to mutually and positively constitute one another. It enabled Taiwan to represent a nation in total (a privilege that the island would not have added if it was simply another province of either the ROC or PRC), while offering the ROC a chance to implement an alternative path for Chinese modernization that was opposed to the class-struggle and radical iconoclasm that grounded the Maoist vision across the strait. As Yang puts it:

Once the motherland retreated into the embrace of Taiwan, the political meaning of the ROC became miniaturized within the contours of the island. Having undergone 60 years of transformation, the meaning of "Taiwan" has become fused into a single body with that of the "Republic of China." The most critical meaning of 1949 within Taiwanese history, indeed one can even say within Chinese history, is the unification in a single body of the Republic of China and Taiwan. This

⁶ For an instance regarding how the Taiwan-ROC neologism has appeared in the official statements of the ROC's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, see You (2021). For President Tsai's own Facebook posts, see the reporting by Zeng (2020).

transformation implanted a "national" sensibility into the course of Taiwanese history. The story of Taiwan's success or failure going forward had to unfurl itself through the currents of this [ROC] historical axis. (Yang, 96)

The great power of Yang's work is that it gives equal footing to both the meaning of the Republic as an experiment in Chinese modernization, and the way Taiwan's own people shaped that modernization to fit the distinct needs of the island community as a whole. Yang argues that through an at times painful process of conflict, compromise, and accommodation, the fusing of the ROC with Taiwan was able to accomplish two major tasks. First, because the ROC staked its legitimacy as a regime in exile on its claim to value and promote traditional Chinese culture (Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism) at a time when each of these three historical traditions was being denounced on the Mainland, ROC-Taiwan was able to construct an educational system in which New Cultural discourses of democracy, individualism, nationalism, and gendered liberation could be integrated with a syncretic absorption of the best of the Confucian, Daoist, and Buddhist traditions. Second, because there existed within the ROC regime strong proponents of democratic liberalism, such forces were (over time) able to work in concert with local Taiwanese nativist movements (themselves informed by island-wide movements for democratic self-governance dating back to the 1920s) to demand the ROC put into effect the democratic structures that its very own 1947 constitution promised. For Yang, then, the ROC-Taiwan experiment is a particularly valuable one, for it realized on the island both the May Fourth ideals of democracy and liberalism, but did so by nurturing rather than denouncing Chinese culture's grounding philosophical and moral traditions. For Yang, it is in Taiwan (and only in Taiwan) that the Sinophone world has a society at once committed to liberal democracy while also epistemologically grounded in the broad syncretic humanism that the best of the Chinese philosophical tradition represents. Yang's work is the most historically nuanced articulation of the pluralizing potentials of the ROC-Taiwan formulation, one that is designed to satisfy the historical end goals of both nativist Taiwanese and pan-Blue Chinese history. It provides Taiwanese nationalists with the island-cumnation formulation that is their historical end goal, while insisting for ROC loyalists on the historically necessary and meaningful nature of the ROC within the contours of modern Chinese history.

To be clear, in her public pronouncements up to this point, Tsai Ing-wen herself has not sought to articulate more deeply what her neologism means, merely pointing to it as a general consensus for the island that can be accepted by most of its people. Interestingly, however, Tsai and Yang did share a platform together in October 2013 in Lugang, where they came together to discuss "Chinese culture in Taiwan." Regardless of how direct an influence Yang's work may have had on Tsai's decision to use the term, there is no doubt that it represents a significant opening up of the discursive terrain for the Taiwanese nationalist camp that she represents. Since Taiwanese nationalism emerged as a potent discursive and mobilizational force on the island in the 1980s, it has struggled, to borrow the words of Chen Kuan-shing (2010), to overcome its "tragic blind spot" (53), which is its privileging of one ethnic group on the island over all others. Within the theoretical structure of Taiwanese nationalism, it is benshengren (本省人) – that is Han peoples from the south of China whose ancestors immigrated to Taiwan before 1945 and thus experienced the Japanese colonial period, who endured the violence of the 228 incident, and who today speak a combination of local languages (most notably Taiwanese Minnan and Hakka) - who are the major historical subject of the Taiwanese nation. In this narrative, the Mainlander community (waishengren 外省 人) who came to the island in 1949 is looked upon, tacitly or explicitly, as outsiders who were systematically privileged by the ROC one-party regime and who are thus forever associated with (and seen as having illegitimately benefitted from) that regime's policies during the Martial Law era.

Taiwanese nationalism's affective structure speaks through powerful aesthetic forms, ranging from poetry and fiction to cinema and digital media, regarding the struggle of the Taiwanese people for self-definition and self-governance. Discourses within this structure can, however, still traffic in ethnically essentializing language, even from some of its most eloquent theorists. Take, for example, the poet and

⁷ Tsai appeared in her role as a chairman of the DPP. For reporting on this public event, which brought together Tsai, Yang, professor Lai Hsi-san, and professor Fabian Heubel, see Yang (2013). For the speech that Yang Rubin gave at the event, see Yang (2015, 145–151).

cultural critique Tzeng Gueihai, who has been a cultural fixture on the south of the island for decades (and particularly in his hometown Kaoshiung), combining literary production with local activism to ensure that Taiwanese nativist concerns remain at the forefront of local and national politics. In October of last year, an international scholarly conference was held to celebrate Tzeng's life and work, co-sponsored by the ROC's Hakka Affairs Council as well as the Pingdong County Government. While Tzeng's decade-long poetic output, literary criticism, and social activism deserve scholarly study, there is no doubt that one finds in his works a privileging of the bensheng ethnicity. Perhaps Tzeng's most famous essay is his 2007 "Diagnostic Notes for Twenty First Century Taiwan" (十一世紀台灣臨床講義), in which he self-consciously pays homage to noted Japanese colonial-era social activist, doctor, and writer Chiang Weishui (蔣渭水), who in 1921 wrote his own manifesto of cultural critique entitled "Clinical Reflections: Diagnostic Notes on Taiwan" (臨床講義-台灣診斷書). Both texts metaphorically present definitions, observations, and diagnoses regarding the "patient" before them. Tzeng claims his patient's full name is "Taiwan Sweet Potato" (臺灣蕃薯 Tâi-uân Han-tsî), the vegetable that grows in many different places across the soils of Taiwan, and a term which signifies locally rooted and locally identifying Taiwanese in contradistinction to 芋仔 (ōo-á), which in Taiwanese is a term for waisheng people. The "place of origin" of the patient is listed as "the original place of residence" of "Taiwan's aboriginal peoples" and "the place of settled residence" of Taiwan's "immigrant" peoples (Tzeng, 2011, 5), thus severing any historical relationship Taiwan may seem to have with the Mainland. The nation's territorial reach includes Taiwan, Jinmen, Mazu, Penghu, and the outer isles, and it is described as "a people of new Asia" (Tzeng, 6) one whose "genetic" inheritance can be traced to Taiwan's Pingpu aboriginals, who became mixed with foreign colonizers who came from China and Holland, creating "a breed of mixed blood" people (Tzeng, 5). The central "occupation" of Taiwan is to "defend the island nation, to establish an independent culture of selfdetermination, and to pursue democracy, freedom, and peace in the world" (Tzeng, 5). In terms of the history of this people, it can be understood as having experienced since 1624 the rule of six different "exogenous political regimes," who not only "extracted labor power" from the Taiwanese people but also "imbued them with slavish thought," and indeed who "attempted to force them into slavery" (Tzeng, 6).

In another essay, Tzeng writes that any lingering Taiwanese affection for the Mainland is a form of "identitarian confusion" (Tzeng, 28), one that continues to befall the Taiwanese people, a byproduct of the slavish education that the ROC's Sino-centric regime imposed, and one that should be critique thoroughly. As for institutions that foster Chinese cultural subjectivity on the island - the most notable of which continue to be the Chinese Literature departments that dot the islands' many public universities – they have no role to play in Taiwan of the twenty-first century. As Tzeng puts it:

"Chinese literature" departments in Taiwanese universities today have already become society's burden, owing to a market imbalance between supply and demand, changes in the educational curriculum, and the progressive changes made by modern society, which have influenced modern pedagogy and its meanings. Taiwanese literature departments and institutes should replace Chinese literature departments in becoming a central intellectual system [in the humanities] for Taiwanese universities...Through the development of teachers and research institutions, Taiwanese literature can become a truly national institutional literature, taking as its pre-condition a respect for plurality that is inherent within any literary eco-system. (Tzeng, 22)

It is clear then that for people who identify closely with the ROC, its origins as a Chinese nationalist project, and Mainland China as a source of cultural and ethnic identity, it would be difficult if not impossible to incorporate themselves into the project presented by nativist thinkers such as Tzeng, who declares the ROC an exogenous regime who enslaved the Taiwanese people, and where a reverence for traditional Chinese learning is labeled as creating identitarian confusion for the people of the island. As Tzeng bluntly puts it, "Taiwanese literature simply does not want to...be a dwarf reflected in the mirror of 'the Chinese classics'" (Tzeng, 127).

Tzeng's writings are just one constellation within the nativist affective structure, and while no doubt not all nativist articulations are as extreme as his in their attempts to severe Taiwanese culture from the Mainland, an intense need to demarcate what is distinctly Taiwanese against a pan-Chinese narrative that would enclose the island within a larger civilizational structure is a central conceptual and emotive point within nativist affect (Hsiau, 2000). It is within this context that Yang's insistence on the *mutually productive* relationship between the ROC and Taiwan enables a re-integration of a Sino-positive structure of feeling *and* thinking back into nativist discourse. Yang's re-reading of the 1949 calamity emphasizes that it enabled the island to absorb the productive aspects of the ROC's history (its commitment to Chinese traditionalism and humanism as educational principle), with local society working over time to force the regime onto a democratic and liberal path. In the face of the nativist exclusion represented by works such as Tzeng's, the ROC-Taiwan formulation offers a broader affective ground for the building of identity on the island in the twenty-first century, synthesizing ROC traditionalism and liberalism with an island-centered drive for democratic self-governance.

The Occlusions of ROC-Taiwan: Whither the White Terror? Whither Class Struggle?

This is not to suggest that the Taiwan-ROC neologism should be accepted by progressive thinkers on the island tout court, for it has two important areas that require further historical reflection and theoretical elaboration. First, while Yang stresses the positive ideals that informed the ROC and emphasizes that it was in Taiwan that the regime was ultimately able to realize its ideals, there is no doubt that his discourse chooses not to explore in detail the historical trauma inflicted upon the island's residents by the 228 incident and the extended period of political repression that followed known as the White Terror. Any recuperation of a positive legacy for the ROC in Taiwan must confront the systemic violence and political repression that the regime engaged in for 40 years. It was George Kerr who wrote the first English-language monograph on the 228 incident, itself a long-repressed work, to tell the world of the "the roadways, the river banks and the harbor shores...strewn with bodies...the Government ha[ving] decided upon a policy of outright terrorism" again the local population (Kerr, 296-297). Later thinkers have discussed eloquently the psychological and ideological effects of the terror in producing today's major political and ethnic divisions on the island. As Chen Kuan-Hsing puts it, during the white terror period, an "an anticommunism-pro-Americanism structure" was installed in not only Taiwan, but also Japan, Okinawa, and South Korea, which meant that "being antigovernment was equivalent to being communist. The authoritarian state could therefore legitimately intimidate and arrest dissidents, and the critical tradition of leftist thought in the region was effectively discontinued" (Chen, 8). One of the psychological consequences of this loss of class critique was a deep intensification of the ethnic divisions created by the 1949 KMT state retreat, which saw Taiwanese society "divided" (Chen, 55) between bensheng and waisheng peoples: "the state violence of the 228 incident was...the symbolic basis of the long-lasting conflict between the two groups, and an important catalyst for the intensification of Taiwanese consciousness" (Chen, 55). Reflecting more deeply on how the legacy of the White Terror continues to inform the diverse ways Taiwan's ethnic communities imagine the ROC regime would provide a more rigorous engagement with the question of why the merging of ROC with Taiwan has been such a difficult theoretical, imaginative, and political task since 1949.8

An equally critical flaw in the ROC-Taiwan formulation is the complete absence (either in its superficial formulation by Tsai or its scholarly formulation by Yang) of any materialist critique whatsoever. While the Tsai administration has gone to some lengths to open official Taiwanese nationalism to questions of gender

⁸ To be fair, Yang Rur-bin does in his work recognize that for victims of the ROC state's political repression, they may never be able to accept the state in Taiwan. But his reminder about what would be lost if the ROC in Taiwan was abolished would be more powerful if he could speak more deeply to those victims of state violence and the nativist movement that emerged to give presence to their voices. For Yang's attempts at understanding the legacy of the violence of the regime post-1947, but also to put such a history into a positive context of Chinese cultural rejuvenation in Taiwan, see Yang (2015, pp. 51–56 and 75–90).

equality and ethnic diversity – notable highlights include Tsai's 2016 official apology to Taiwan's aboriginal peoples for the state's historical neglect of their cultures and languages,9 as well as the broad support DPP legislators showed for the legalization of gay marriage in the country in 2019¹⁰ – the government has been notably reticent to engage with questions of economic inequality, and generally refrains from speaking of material inequality through the problematic of class. Early in her first administration, the Tsai government did pass a reform to the nation's Labor Standards Law, which sought to provide a guaranteed 2 days of rest per week for workers (known in Chinese as 一例一体, meaning one day of fixed rest and one day of flexible holiday per week, with the latter to be taken or not at the discretion of workers themselves). However, the government amended the law in favor of employers in early 2018 after capitalist interests from across the economy, from small-scale shops to medium-sized enterprises to major corporations, complained that it would add to rising costs at a time of increased trade friction with China.¹¹ After the government's poor showing in November 2018 local elections, which were interpreted by some as being fueled by the Taiwanese bourgeoisie punishing the government for its tortured handling of the labor reform bill, the government declined to pursue any more progressive reforms to questions of labor, taxation, or wealth distribution in the county, ¹² Internationally, the government has moved to deepen Taiwan's relations with American commercial interests. For example, the Tsai government used the political capital it gained from its overwhelming victory in the 2020 presidential election to push through a law liberalizing the importation of American pork products into Taiwan. The move risks destabilizing Taiwan's substantial domestic pork market and has generated widespread concern over chemical additives used in American products.¹³ However, the "liberalization" of commercial relations around meat products was a long-standing demand of the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT), and the Tsai administration justified the move to the public with the retort that it would pave the way for a general free trade agreement between the two countries, with commercial and military integration being seen as two sides of a pro-American coin. Indeed, the Tsai administration was one of the few foreign governments which the Trump administration enjoyed relatively frictionless relations with, with multiple rounds of weapons purchases being approved during the course of the Trump administration and an unprecedented level of public visibility between the two governments established.¹⁴

That the Taiwanese nationalism of the Tsai government could so easily be incorporated into the global commercial interests of the United States speaks to a larger theoretical lacuna that exists within Taiwanese nationalism, and that the formulation ROC-Taiwan (at least in its current guise) has done nothing to address. The most notable of Taiwanese nationalist thinkers, including such luminaries as Shih Ming, Chen Fangming, and Tzeng Gueihai, self-consciously utilize Marxist analytics in their works. For example, in Shih's famed A Four Hundred Year History of the Taiwanese People (台灣人四百年史), he provides a class analysis of colonial society under Japanese rule and deplores the fact that anticolonial movements were largely led by landowners and the bourgeoisie, which refused to place proletarian liberation at the forefront of their movements (Shih, 688). Likewise, Chen Fangming has long been interested in the history of Taiwanese leftist movements during the colonial period. In his magisterial History of New Taiwan Literature (台灣新文學史), which has become a standard textbook for the teaching of Taiwan's literary and cultural history on the island, he too adopts a materialist perspective, grounding changes in language and literature in transformations in the economic mode of production brought to Taiwan by Japanese capitalism (Chen, 44-47). However, in both Chen and Shih's work, the imperatives of the Taiwanese independence movement that is, the establishment and maintenance of a Taiwanese nation free from Mainland Chinese control ultimate overshadows the materialist critique to be found in their discourse, taking rhetorical precedence.

⁹ See Office of the President Republic of China (Taiwan) (2016).

¹⁰ For an excellent analysis of the March 2019 vote in the Legislative Yuan legalizing same-sex marriage, see Wu (2019).

¹¹ For an analysis of the labor reform bill backtrack, see Ye (2017).

¹² For an analysis of the 2018 local elections, see Kong (2018) et al.

¹³ For an analysis of the liberalization of pork imports, see Lin et al. (2020)

¹⁴ Publicly visible official interaction between the governments reached its highpoint when late in the Trump administration Kelly Craft, the United States envoy to the UN, planned to visit Taiwan. The trip was ultimately canceled at the last minute reportedly due to Chinese political pressure. For reporting, see Nichols and Pamuk (2021).

Take, for example, a famous moment in Shih's *A Four Hundred Year History of the Taiwanese People*, where he describes the meaning of the 228 movement:

The struggle against A-shan (阿山) that defined the 228 revolution...thoroughly destroyed the connections within the realm of consciousness that the Taiwanese people had with the Chinese people, connections that had once existed because of the shared blood relations between them. Taiwanese nationalism, that is the fervent desire for the independence of the Taiwanese ethnic-people, began to advocate for the interests of its people, concerning itself with the fate and future of its people. This thoroughgoing national ideal became the Taiwanese people's single and highest principle. (1980: 1096)

Here, Shih not only defines the 228 incident as an anti-Mainlander bout of ethnic struggle against outsiders, using a now-outdated term for the Mainlander population (阿山), but he turns 228 into a dividing line in the collective consciousness of the Taiwanese people, in which any lingering attachment to historical relations with China was severed, and a new national ideal emerged as "the single and highest principle" that all Taiwanese longed for. Chen Fangming too has interpreted 228 as having been borne out of the differences that he perceives as having existed between Taiwanese and Mainlander-Chinese political cultures, disabusing the former of any lingering illusions or loyalties they had regarding the latter (Chen, 2009, 212–228). This is echoed in Tzeng's work, in which he states that the collective goal of the island's people is to "defend the island nation, to establish an independent culture of self-determination, and to pursue democracy, freedom, and peace in the world" (Tzeng, 2011, 5). In all such instances, ethnic unity and national independence become the "single and highest principle" of nativist scholarship, overriding any perceived commitment to Marxism or transnational class struggle as the ground of politics and scholarship.

The privileging of ethnic unity over inter-ethnic and transnational class struggle was a feature of the writings and activism of pro-American post-war advocates of Taiwanese independence in exile such as Thomas Liao (廖文毅) and his brother Joshua (廖文奎), who in late 1948 in Hong Kong advocated for Taiwan to be placed into trusteeship under the United Nations with the hope of providing the island's people with a referendum through which they could decide their own future (Kerr, 454–460). Thomas Liao was as anticommunist as he was anti-GMD, and he staked the success of his project (which he pursued living in exile in Japan in the 1950s) in the hope that Taiwan could embrace a democratic liberalism that he associated with the United States. Liao's antisocialist position would eventually enable him to make peace with the GMD regime in Taiwan, when he returned to the island in 1965 expressing his support for the ROC and his abandonment of the Taiwan independence movement, proclaiming that the greatest threat facing the island was from communism and that all Taiwanese had to work with the GMD to prevent the island from falling under its sway (Kerr, 469–472). That Liao could be co-opted by the GMD state machine speaks to the barely concealed intimacies that exist between Taiwanese nationalism and GMD Chinese nationalism: anticommunism.

Such intimacies can be understood as a product of the post-1949 cold-war environment in which Taiwan found itself locked within, with the anticommunism of the ROC state particularly inimical to grassroots leftist or labor politics. As the political scientist David D Yang (2007) puts it in describing Taiwan's democratization in comparative perspective, "unlike most cases in Latin America, Southern Europe, or elsewhere in Asia, where powerful labor movements destabilized and delegitimized authoritarian rule, organized labor in Taiwan never broke free from state control and the few attempts at independent labor mobilization were abject failures" (Yang, 506). Yang notes the complexity of class and ethnic relations during the martial law period, where *bensheng* Taiwanese, while possessing little political power ("the apex of the party-state [was] dominated by a small elite of mainlanders" (509)), actually possessed considerable economic power and were squarely part of an emerging middle and upper class on the island. As Yang notes:

[During the 1970s] the economy came to de dominated by small to medium-size enterprises having sufficient resources to maintain a significant level of autonomy yet numerous enough to avoid direct confrontation with the state. It is worth noting here that although economic resources were diffused, they were largely controlled by native Taiwanese. The conventional wisdom on the island was that while mainlanders tended to have higher-status government jobs, the Taiwanese had higher income and greater wealth. The result was an equilibrium of sorts, with mainlanders dominating high politics and the Taiwanese taking the lead in the economy. (Yang, 510)

When the DDP emerged in 1987, while it enjoyed a "mass support base, diffused but loyal" (Yang, 510) among the urban and rural working classes (Yang, 519-521), it was not an anticapitalist political party by any means, and it was even more virulent in its fear and opposition in relation to the revolution across the strait. As Yang puts it, in the late 1980s, "a KMT 'sellout' [of Taiwan to China] was one of the opposition's great fears" (Yang, 510). The capital-bearing urban middle and upper classes that the DPP sought to attract had clear class interests to protect: "the new middle-class...had been the prime beneficiaries of the developmental state and were looking to protect and augment their vested interests...not so much out of a fondness for the regime as out of concern for their property" (Yang, 522-523). As such, Yang describes a waning of attention to questions of labor and economic justice as the DDP became institutionalized in the post-1987 period, after a brief period in which such questions were a cardinal feature of the Dangwai movement, owing to its social base of support among workers and peasants:

Even by the mid-1980s the opposition's pro-labor flavor was already dissipating...in 1978 seven of the twenty planks in the Dang-wai platform were targeted explicitly at working-class concerns; but by 1986 these items hard largely disappeared. Even as critics heckled the opposition leadership (in true Marxist fashion) for their "inability to shed their petit-bourgeois mindset," leftists and the leftist agenda were steadily forced off the main stage, such that by the 1990s the party was virtually indistinguishable from the KMT on socioeconomic issues. What took their place was an emotional and sometimes strident nationalism, focusing in particular on the promotion of a Taiwanese identity distinct from China and eventual Taiwanese independence. (Yang, 525)

That the ROC-Taiwan formulation seems to have become so smoothly adoptable for the DDP is hardly a surprise, given the shared anti-communist political commitments that have historically marked both Blue and Green camps in Taiwan, and the nativist retreat from a commitment to progressive labor politics by the mid-1980s. 15 As for scholars who operate more firmly within the ROC half of the dualism – for example, Yang Rur-bin's praise of the republic as representing Chinese humanism and liberalism – his work up to this point has not been engaged with the question of how class inequality could be productively addressed from within the syncretic combination of Chinese traditionalism and political liberalism that for him ROC-Taiwan represents.

Integrating Pluralism and Materialism into ROC-Taiwan: **Rediscovering Taiwan's early Marxist History**

All of which begs the question, how can the problem of class struggle be written into the ROC-Taiwan neologism, lest it is continued to be used (as it is today) to normalize capitalist inequality. Here, a return to the early history of Taiwanese Marxism is powerfully instructive, and particularly an inquiry into the life and times of TCP co-founder Xie Xuehong.16 Before founding the TCP in 1928, Xie had studied revolutionary strategy in Shanghai and Moscow, becoming the first female socialist of international import to emerge from Taiwan. Though the TCP was beset by factional infighting throughout its lifetime, and operated for less than 4 years, its commitment to social revolution led by workers and peasants represented a genuinely radical path for social transformation on the island. Xie spent 9 years in prison following the Japanese colonial government's crackdown on the TCP in 1931, becoming an iconic symbol of anticolonial resistance among Taiwanese.

The founding charter of the TCP, drafted by Xie and her colleagues in 1928 with the aid of representatives of the both CCP and Japanese Communist Party (JCP), is a document that is much beloved by

¹⁵ In 1984, Taiwanese socialist critic and author Chen Yingzhen provided a withering critique of what he saw as the bourgeois interests that defined the Dangwai leadership and their political thought, criticizing them precisely for their investment in ethnic rather than class politics. See Chen (1984).

¹⁶ For an extensive biographical treatment of Xie, see Chen (2009); for a further discussion of the complex meaning of Xie's life, and particularly interpretations of her political project written by Mainland revolutionaries and scholars, see Lin (2010).

Taiwanese nationalists, for it outlines a historical narrative regarding how the Taiwanese ethnic-people (台 灣民族) came to be.¹⁷ As the charter puts it, the Taiwanese nation is made of a mixture of the southern Han Chinese who came to the island with Koxinga's regime as well as Taiwanese aboriginals, who collectively fought against successive colonial regimes on the island, including the Dutch, the Qing, and the Japanese. The document calls for the creation of an independent Taiwanese republic as the institutional means to gain national liberation for this ethnic people from Japanese colonial rule. The document thus brought Taiwanese ethnic nationalism to the island through the auspices of socialist revolution. Chen Kuan-Hsing has described the historical emergence of this coupling in the following way: "ideas such as national selfdetermination and socialism, which were then spreading rapidly around the globe, inspired Taiwanese communists to press for an independent Taiwan. Grounded in class and anti-colonial struggles, this movement marks the beginning of the theorization of Taiwanese nationalism" (Chen, 55).

The TCP charter thus needs to be read within not just the context of Taiwanese history, but the larger context of how Marxism as a globally circulating discourse and practice sought to deal with the national question in the early decades of the twentieth century. Before the Bolshevik seizure of power in October 1917, Lenin had championed the rights of nations to self-determination, addressing the question repeatedly between 1912 and 1916. Yet, as historian Terry Martin has described, this prerevolutionary support for national self-determination "was designed to recruit ethnic support for the revolution, not to provide a model for the governing of a multiethnic state" (Martin, 2). The actual revolutionary process had shown Lenin the force of nationalism across the old Tsarist empire and forced the question to the forefront of Marxist debate once again after 1917. As Martin puts it:

Although Lenin took the nationalities question seriously, the unexpected strength of nationalism as a mobilizing force during the revolution and civil war nevertheless greatly surprised and disturbed him. The Bolsheviks expected nationalism in Poland and Finland, but the numerous nationalist movements that sprang up across most of the former Russian empire were not expected. The strong nationalist movement in Ukraine was particularly unnerving. This direct confrontation with nationalism compelled the Bolsheviks to formulate a new nationalities policy. This did not occur without contestation. On the one side were the nation-builders, led by Lenin and Stalin; on the other side were the internationalists, led by Georgii Piatakov and Nikolai Bukharin. At the Eight Party Congress in March, 1919, the two sides clashed over the question of the right of national self-determination. (Martin, 2)

While Piatakov and Bukharin argued that "the right of nations to self-determination has shown itself, in practice, during the social revolution, as a slogan uniting all counterrevolutionary forces" (Martin, 2), Lenin countered that it was only by recognizing the right of minority nationalities of the former Tsarist empire to achieve the forms of nationhood that they would be convinced to support the revolution, warning his fellow Russian revolutionaries that "scratch any Communist and you find a Great Russian chauvinist...He sits in many of us and we must fight him" (Martin, 3). What emerged within the Soviet Union was the central government's qualified support for national determination for former minority nationalities of the Tsarist empire, granting them the *forms* of nationhood (language, education, cultural policy, self-governance), provided that it be done within a unified Soviet Union. In terms of its foreign policy, the leaders of the early Soviet state expressed support for movements of national-liberation in places such as Ireland (Corcora and Hill, 1982), India (Ray, 1969), and Turkey (Giritli, 1970), as well as offering support for Polish (Stanislawska, 1975) and Finnish (Kirby, 1976) sovereignty. 18 In his debates with Rosa Luxembourg in 1914 over the question of the validity of the right to self-determination, Lenin claimed that the nationalism of the

¹⁷ See Chen Fannging's analysis of the document and the founding of the TCP in Chen (48-64).

¹⁸ In terms of Soviet-Irish relations, Corcora and Hill note that "In the years 1917–22 the new Bolshevik government certainly showed an interest in the activities of the Sinn Fein revolutionary movement, and there were substantial contacts between the two internationally shunned governments...the Russian revolutions of 1917 were generally welcomed in Ireland, and the Irish labour movement genuinely admired and congratulated the achievements of the Bolshevik revolution. In addition, the declared Soviet commitment to the rights of self-determination, anti-colonialism, disarmament and Third World development are consonant with certain values and symbols in the Irish political culture." (254). In terms of the early Soviet state's relationship with Poland, Stanislawksa (1975) notes that "up until 1939 Soviet Russia had acknowledged Polish sovereignty, had accepted the borders established in the Riga Treaty, and had repeatedly repudiated the Tsarist policies toward Poland" (30).

oppressed had a "democratic content" (Martin, 8), and thus, Bolsheviks could support nationalist movements led by the bourgeoisie, so long as those movements were not openly hostile to working classes within those countries. In the Chinese context, this position expressed itself during the early 1920s in the Soviet proposal of and support for the cooperative pact between the CCP and GMD, designed to carry out a national revolution on the Mainland first before a socialist revolution could be pursued (Elleman, 1995).

A close reading of the TCP's charter reveals that its drafters were well aware of these larger overall tensions within Marxist practice globally between ethnic nationalism and transnational class solidarity, and they built into the charter a conceptual check against Taiwanese nationalism from becoming an ethnic discourse shorn of class liberation. According to the charter, any movement for national liberation that only secured the interests of the landowning gentry and urban bourgeoisie at the expense of workers and peasants was to be wholly rejected. In the section of the charter discussing the relationship that should exist between the "The Taiwanese Communist Party and the Movement for National Liberation," it expressed the point in the following way:

Though the bourgeoisie and their running dogs go about everywhere announcing their commitment to the equality of nations, to national self-determination, it is in fact nothing more than a hollow catchphrase for minor nations. The Taiwanese Communist Party must unmask such false rhetoric for what it is. Regardless of whatever else, *the demand for national independence only has meaning when it is articulated within the demand for the abolishment of classes*. Seen from the perspective of historical development, the movement for national liberation – that is, the Taiwan independence movement-cannot be carried our through peaceful or gradual reformist means. Particularly, this movement will not succeed at all if it is led by the bourgeoisie. (Lu, 215–216, italics added)

For the founders of the TCP, a commitment to proletarian liberation was the core interest of revolutionary action, with national liberation finding meaning only *in and through* this demand. This was *not* a rejection of support for national independence, but rather a reminder that such a process should not be used to normalize capitalist relations and solidify the social hegemony of counter-revolutionary forces. Piatakov and Bukharin's concern regarding nationalism serving as a force "uniting all counterrevolutionary forces" was clearly shared by the TCP's early founders.

This primacy of class rather than ethnic identification is a key element within the charter, though it has been gradually lost in the writings of later generations of Taiwanese nationalist thinkers. The most immediate political expression of such conceptual loss is a contemporary DDP regime whose commitment to class liberation is nowhere to be found, but who (to borrow the TCP's words) "go about everywhere announcing their commitment to the equality of nations, to national self-determination," while real social inequality accelerates across the island.¹¹ The founders of the TCP clearly understood in their time the consequences of losing class struggle as a concomitant element of nationalist activism, and their critiques of the reformist parties of their time for normalizing relations of exploitation (including Lin Xiantang's Taiwan's People's Party 台灣民眾黨) could be equally as applied to the DPP of today.

As to how to foster a proletarian-oriented sensibility for political action on the island, the charter not only featured a detailed analysis of the industrial monopoly capitalism that the Japanese had brought to the island of Taiwan but also analyzed how such newfound economic structures grafted themselves onto existing feudal relations on the island (in which powerful kinship lineages dominated land ownership), arguing that in Taiwan there existed a violent mixture of feudal and capitalist orders which mutually reinforced one another. The charter emphasized the building of a broad national coalition of workers, peasants, women, and the petit-bourgeoisie to counter this feudal-capitalist hegemony. The charter's inclusion of not just class but gendered social relations seen within the context of capitalism as a transnational phenomenon is a particularly important point for contemporary Taiwanese nationalists to remember: exclusively nativist historical visions, no matter how attuned to questions of gender within Han-Taiwanese life, risk occluding the presence of other forms of gendered labor on the island. For example, in recent

¹⁹ The independent Taiwanese media group *The Reporter* (報導者) provides the best source for ongoing reportage on social inequality in Taiwan in an accessible format. See, for example, their excellent series on housing insecurity in contemporary Taiwan, Zhang and Chen (2018).

years, female caregivers from the Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam, and other South Asian countries have become a critical source of domestic labor for Taiwan's rapidly aging society, but their stories rarely get foregrounded in public discourse or Taiwanese nationalist rhetoric, and they continue to be subject to complex forms of social differentiation, isolation, and exploitation (Lin and Belanger, 2012; Chen, 2016).

Interestingly, the charter explicitly stated that aside from integrating this broad social coalition, the TCP also had to "support the Chinese revolution...vigorously introducing the nature of the Chinese revolution and its major events" (Lu, 214) to the Taiwanese public. Such work would build toward "a time when [popular] action is possible, mobilizing the masses and utilizing demonstrations and other actions to work in concert with the Chinese revolution to collectively oppose the global nature of imperialism" (Lu, 214, italics added). This call to support the Chinese revolution existed alongside such nationalist slogans as "establish the Taiwanese republic" and "long live the independence of the Taiwanese people." Clearly, the theory of the Taiwanese ethnic nation that the charter put forth was not seen as negating Taiwan's ability to work in close concert with the Chinese revolution. Taiwanese left nationalism and the Chinese revolution could mutually support one another, an openness to cooperation that differs markedly from Taiwanese nationalist discourse today. Indeed, while Taiwanese nationalist thinkers actively utilize Marxist analytics in their work, they often reject the Chinese revolution as a source for historical insight, theoretical guidance, and political inspiration, seeing the regime across the strait (in historical and contemporary terms) as antidemocratic and inhumane.²⁰ As such China's multi-ethnic imperial past and its radical revolutionary history remain untapped resources for thought, as if Taiwan had little to learn from Mainland China's complex experiment in building a socialist society in a multi-ethnic country whose founding cultural heritage (Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism) Taiwan also shares.

Would it not be more enabling to take inspiration from the 1928 charter and imagine the ways in which Taiwanese nationalism can address material inequality through sustained popular mobilization, with the Chinese revolution (broadly defined, from the late Qing to the present) a historical resource to learn from rather than outright reject? Turning to modern Chinese history – whether seen in its revolutionary, liberal, or new Confucian dimensions - as a resource for progressive thought for contemporary Taiwan is a recognition that historical events in the Mainland have had and continue to have important implications for the larger Sino-cultural world and were intimately intertwined with Taiwan's own modern history. Understanding, for example, how the question of a multi-ethnic polity was negotiated by earlier Chinese regimes during imperial times may provide analytical frameworks for thinking unity amid difference in both the Mainland and Taiwan; understanding how Neo-Confucian thought from Song times onward articulated incipient critiques of authoritarianism, emphasizing the liberating potential of individual and collective moral cultivation outside of state power, can deepen contemporary discourses surrounding democracy, the state, and the aims of education on both sides of the strait today; engaging with New Culture-May Fourth as the names for an extended historical movement by which liberalism, anarchism, socialism, and traditionalism were debated, contested, and combined in various creative ways on the Mainland and in Taiwan can provide historical inspiration, if not productive models, for such experiments on the island today; understanding the successes and failures of state socialism from the 1950s to the 70s in China is a critical prerequisite for understanding the 1980s state embrace of reform and opening and should be a critical context for any study of cross-strait relations today; and the Mainland government's openness during the 1980s not just toward market-based economic policies, but to re-appraising and cultivating China's own cultural traditions (Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism as still-lived modes of social, intellectual, and spiritual life) after a 30-year period of Maoist iconoclasm, is certainly one of the most important spaces open for

²⁰ In Chen Fangming's biography of Xie Xuehong, for example, he emphasizes the costs for Taiwanese nationalists of collaborating with the CCP – a forfeiture of their commitment to Taiwanese ethnic nationhood and a submission to Mainland political control (see Chen, 264–346). For Tzeng, the crucial task facing intellectuals, authors, and cultural workers on the island is "to free [Taiwan] from the colonial rule [of the GMD state structure], to construct a new constitution belonging to the island and its people, and to rectify the name of the country and join the United Nations" (Tzeng, 35); Tzeng evidences no interest in his writings in dialoguing with the Chinese revolution as a historical project.

scholarly dialogue across the strait, given the ROC state's historical commitment to cultivating Chinese traditionalism, and the PRC's renewed relationship to tradition since reform and opening began.

Conclusion: Strengthening the Analytic Purchase of ROC-Taiwan

If, as Jameson long ago suggested, the story of the dialectic in history is told in the mode of the ironic reversal, with strength becoming weakness and vice versa, then contemporary Taiwan is telling its own version of this tale: what was once seen by the nativist movement as a state to be rejected is now for the nativist governing party a state to be protected, with a longed for transcendence of the ROC state form currently impossible for both domestic and international reasons. Given this overarching context, one productive task for today's intellectuals on the island is to build on the important work done by Yang Rur-bin, who has rightly insisted on the pluralizing potentials of "ROC-Taiwan" as a means of integrating nativist and loyalist affective structures on the island, evaluating positively the contribution that both these communities have made to shaping today's syncretic island nation. Yet absent some kind of materialist critique, the neologism itself will lock ROC-Taiwan into liberal capitalist developmental trajectories (even if said trajectories are supported by a commitment to Chinese philosophical cultivation), and keep the history of socialism as a lived struggle for subaltern liberation out of contemporary political and intellectual life. Likewise, a more thorough engagement with the legacy of 228 and the White Terror would enable this discourse to more rigorously articulate how different ethnic groups on the island imagine the ROC as a political regime, ranging from an outside force to be resisted to a recuperative humanist project to be cherished.

A leftist vision of ROC-Taiwan would insist that no combination of ROC loyalism and Taiwanese nativism can succeed if it shields itself from solving material inequality, which means staking out a critical position regarding the way capitalism has operated historically on the island and continues to do so today. Between ROC and Taiwan, loyalism and nativism, lies an un-addressed history of capitalist inequality, and it is this materialist story that needs to be integrated into Taiwan's newly found national neologism if the island is not just to be ethnically plural but materially just. To build materialist intellectual and political practices in ROC-Taiwan, a return to the origins of Soviet, Chinese, and Taiwanese socialism is productive, which as seen by the TCP's founding charter was a time in which a commitment to Taiwanese national sovereignty did not exclude productive dialogue with the Chinese revolution, where (as evidenced by Lenin's policies on the national question) national sovereignty and multi-ethnic integration within a larger political union were not inimical, an era in which the slogans "long live the independence of the Taiwanese people" and "support the Chinese revolution" were seen not as mutually exclusionary but, quite the opposite, mutually constitutive. Does ROC-Taiwan dare to think in such terms today?

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