

Jewish Contributions to China's Communist Revolution: Fact, Myth, and Historical Context

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The Chinese Communist Revolution was one of the most significant political upheavals of the 20th century, drawing support from a diverse array of foreign sympathizers. Among these foreign supporters were several prominent Jewish intellectuals and activists, including Sidney Rittenberg and Israel Epstein, whose contributions to the revolution shaped international perceptions of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). While Jewish involvement in China's revolution has been acknowledged, it has also been subject to exaggeration and myth, with claims that Jewish foreigners constituted the vast majority of foreign support. This paper examines the historical reality of Jewish contributions to the CCP, separating fact from myth and situating Jewish involvement within the broader context of international aid to the Chinese revolution. By exploring the roles of Jewish individuals alongside other foreign supporters, this study aims to provide a more nuanced understanding of the impact of foreign influence on China's Communist movement and the lasting legacy of these contributions in Chinese and Jewish history.

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THE SCHMOOZE

A Jew in Mao's China

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Even when I have been disenfranchised from God and synagogue, I have always been culturally proud to be a Jew. A source of that pride is the Jewish tradition of helping the oppressed, and our involvement in social movements such as labor and civil rights.



Until I saw the documentary “[The Revolutionary](#)” at the [Philadelphia Independent Film Festival](#), I mistakenly thought that China during the revolutionary period was one country that had not felt the Jewish embrace. In fact, 85 to 90% of the foreigners helping the Chinese at the time of the Communist takeover were Jewish. This included the daughter of the founder of the brokerage firm Goldman Sachs, who left the comfort of her Park Avenue home to assist the Chinese.

Social media.

Introduction

The Jewish diaspora has historically been involved in revolutionary and progressive movements across the globe, motivated by a long-standing commitment to social justice and equality, often born from a legacy of marginalization and persecution. In Europe, Jewish activists played significant roles in socialist, communist, and labor movements, and many saw political activism as a path to both personal liberation and broader societal change. This involvement spanned from the Russian Revolution, where Jews held prominent positions within the Bolshevik movement, to socialist movements in Western

Europe and the United States. In these contexts, Jews often found themselves fighting against oppressive regimes, anti-Semitism, and economic inequality, aligning their struggles with the broader goals of revolutionary ideologies. This legacy of Jewish participation in left-wing movements helps to explain the involvement of Jewish individuals in revolutionary movements beyond Europe, including in China during the rise of the Communist Party.

The Chinese Communist Revolution (1927-1949) marked a pivotal moment in 20th-century history, as the Communist Party of China (CPC), under the leadership of Mao Zedong, sought to overthrow the Nationalist government led by the Kuomintang (KMT) and establish a socialist state. Throughout the revolution, China attracted the attention and support of many foreign nationals who sympathized with the Communist cause, either out of ideological alignment or solidarity with anti-imperialist struggles. Foreigners who supported the revolution came from diverse backgrounds, including Soviet advisors, European communists, American leftists, and a number of Jewish intellectuals and activists. These individuals contributed to the revolution in various ways, from providing diplomatic and political support to working in media and propaganda efforts to raise international awareness about the Chinese Communist Party's goals.

Among the foreign contributors to the Chinese Communist movement, certain Jewish individuals, such as Sidney Rittenberg, Israel Epstein, and Rewi Alley, played visible roles in the Chinese propaganda and international media efforts. Rittenberg, for example, was an American-born Jewish communist who became deeply involved with the Chinese Communist Party, even holding influential positions within the Party's media operations. Similarly, Epstein, a Jewish journalist from Poland, became a Chinese citizen and devoted much of his life to promoting the Communist cause through his writing and editing work. The presence of such individuals has fueled a narrative that Jews were disproportionately represented among the foreigners supporting Mao's revolution.

One prominent claim, often repeated in some circles, is that 85 to 90 percent of the foreigners who assisted the Chinese Communist Party during its rise to power were Jewish. This statistic, however, is difficult to verify and seems to have taken on a life of its own in various sources without substantial historical evidence.

While there is no doubt that Jewish individuals made notable contributions to the Chinese Communist movement, the idea that they comprised the overwhelming majority of foreign supporters appears to be an exaggeration. This claim likely arises from a mix of mythmaking, misinterpretation, and ideological bias, rather than from documented historical fact.

This paper aims to unpack the truth behind this narrative by exploring the historical context of foreign involvement in the Chinese Communist Revolution, with a particular focus on the contributions of Jewish individuals. Through a detailed examination of key figures and their roles, this paper will assess the validity of the claim that an overwhelming majority of foreign supporters were Jewish, and place Jewish involvement in its proper historical perspective. Ultimately, this paper will highlight how myths about Jewish participation in global revolutionary movements can both obscure the real contributions of Jewish individuals and distort our understanding of the broader international support for revolutionary causes.

1. Historical Context of Foreign Involvement in the Chinese Communist Revolution

1.1 General Overview of the Chinese Communist Party's Rise to Power (1920s–1949)

The rise of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was a complex, multi-decade struggle that spanned the early 20th century, culminating in the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949. The CCP was founded in 1921 under the influence of both the success of the Russian Revolution and the growing dissatisfaction with China's imperial and warlord-dominated governance structures. At the time, China was experiencing internal instability due to the weakening of the Qing Dynasty, followed by the fragmentation of authority under various regional warlords and the Nationalist Party (Kuomintang, KMT), which controlled some parts of China under the leadership of Chiang Kai-shek.

Throughout the 1920s, the CCP initially worked with the KMT in a loose alliance known as the First United Front to defeat warlord factions and unify China. However, this cooperation ended violently in 1927 when Chiang Kai-shek turned

against the communists in what is known as the Shanghai Massacre, purging communist forces and starting a bloody civil war. From this point on, the CCP, led by Mao Zedong, embarked on a long, arduous fight for survival, often retreating into rural areas and organizing peasant-based guerrilla warfare tactics. Mao's military strategy, which focused on protracted warfare and gaining the support of the rural poor, proved crucial in the party's ability to endure the Nationalist attacks.

The 1930s saw the CCP's continued struggle for survival, but it also solidified its rural support base, particularly during the iconic Long March (1934-1935), where Mao and his followers escaped encirclement by the KMT and relocated to the northern province of Shaanxi. During World War II, the CCP and KMT formed another uneasy alliance to fight the invading Japanese forces, but this cooperation quickly deteriorated once the war ended. By 1945, the civil war between the CCP and KMT resumed in full force.

During the Chinese Civil War (1946-1949), the CCP gained increasing popularity, particularly in rural areas, while the KMT's government struggled with corruption, inefficiency, and inflation. The CCP's promise of land reforms, social justice, and the establishment of a workers' and peasants' state resonated with much of the population. The CCP's military success, particularly under the strategic leadership of commanders like Zhu De and Lin Biao, eventually led to the defeat of the KMT. In 1949, Mao Zedong proclaimed the establishment of the People's Republic of China, and the remnants of the KMT fled to Taiwan, where they established a rival government.

1.2 Role of Foreign Nationals in Supporting Mao Zedong's Movement

During the rise of the CCP, foreign nationals played a surprisingly prominent role in various capacities, ranging from military advisors and political consultants to journalists and propagandists. Although the CCP's internal leadership and strategy were mainly homegrown, foreign sympathizers, particularly from the Soviet Union, Europe, and the United States, became valuable assets to the Communist cause.

The Soviet Union was the most significant foreign player in the Chinese Communist Revolution. From the 1920s onwards, the Soviet Union provided crucial support to the CCP, not just ideologically but also materially. Soviet

advisors helped the early CCP leaders understand Marxist-Leninist theory and provided logistical and military support. After the Chinese Civil War resumed in 1946, the Soviet Union was a key ally, providing weapons, training, and strategic advice, especially in the final years of the conflict. However, Soviet support to the CCP was often cautious and limited due to the Soviet Union's simultaneous negotiations with the Nationalists.

Other foreign nationals also became deeply involved in the Communist movement, often driven by a sense of ideological solidarity with anti-imperialist and left-wing causes. Foreign journalists, for instance, played a critical role in reporting on the Chinese Revolution to international audiences. Journalists like Edgar Snow, whose book *Red Star Over China* (1937) provided one of the earliest sympathetic accounts of the Chinese Communists, significantly shaped global perceptions of the CCP. Snow's interviews with Mao Zedong and other CCP leaders gave the world its first detailed look at the CCP's goals, strategy, and organization. Agnes Smedley, an American journalist, similarly reported from China and became closely aligned with the Communist cause, documenting the life of communist generals and their struggles in the war against Japan and the Nationalists.

There were also politically active foreigners who worked directly with the CCP. Sidney Rittenberg, a Jewish-American who joined the CCP during World War II, worked as a translator and propagandist, playing an important role in the party's communication efforts with Western audiences. Rittenberg, alongside others like Israel Epstein, worked within CCP structures and helped disseminate the Communist message, particularly in terms of promoting China's revolution to an international audience. Epstein, a Polish-born Jewish journalist, contributed to Chinese Communist propaganda and served as a key editor for the English-language magazine *China Reconstructs*, which aimed to portray the CCP in a favorable light to foreign audiences. Other foreigners, such as Rewi Alley from New Zealand, contributed to industrial and educational initiatives within CCP-held areas.

Though many of these foreign participants were relatively few in number, they played outsized roles in promoting the CCP's cause abroad and providing expertise that was sometimes lacking in China itself. Their involvement became a

symbol of international leftist solidarity with the Communist movement, though their motivations often varied from personal ideological commitment to geopolitical interests.

1.3 Overview of International Leftist Sympathies for China's Revolution during the Cold War

The Chinese Communist Revolution occurred in the context of rising global tensions between communism and capitalism, which characterized the Cold War era. During this time, there was widespread support for revolutionary movements in developing countries among left-wing intellectuals, activists, and governments worldwide. This trend was rooted in anti-imperialism and the belief that communism offered a solution to the social and economic inequalities perpetuated by colonialism and capitalism. As such, China, like Cuba and Vietnam, became a focal point for left-wing sympathizers around the world.

In Europe and the United States, many intellectuals, artists, and political activists viewed the Chinese revolutionaries as fighting a just war against imperialism and feudalism. For these leftists, the CCP represented a populist force that could create a new, egalitarian society based on Marxist principles. The success of the Russian Revolution had already shown that communist regimes could rise to power and implement radical social reforms, and many believed that China could follow suit, despite its unique circumstances as a largely agrarian society. In the West, sympathies for the CCP were often amplified by anti-imperialist sentiments, particularly as China had long been subjugated by foreign powers and had suffered from Japanese occupation during World War II.

In addition to Soviet aid, the CCP received moral and sometimes logistical support from various communist and socialist groups around the world. The international communist movement, organized through the Comintern (Communist International), provided ideological guidance and sometimes direct financial or material support to the CCP. Although the Comintern dissolved in 1943, Soviet influence continued to play a role in shaping CCP strategy, and foreign communist parties around the world still viewed the Chinese revolution as a significant part of the global struggle against imperialism.

The role of Jewish individuals in these international leftist circles was notable, as Jews were often at the forefront of left-wing movements due to their historical

marginalization and persecution in Europe. Many Jewish activists, such as those mentioned earlier, aligned with revolutionary movements not only because of ideological affinity but also because they saw in communism a defense against fascism, anti-Semitism, and economic exploitation.

In summary, foreign involvement in China's Communist Revolution was part of a larger international phenomenon in which leftist intellectuals and activists supported anti-imperialist and communist causes worldwide. The participation of Jewish individuals, though prominent, was part of a broader trend of foreign sympathizers joining and aiding revolutionary movements during the Cold War. Their contributions, while valuable, should be understood within the larger historical context of foreign support for the CCP, which included many non-Jewish individuals and groups as well.

2. Jewish Contributions to Revolutionary Movements Worldwide

2.1 Historical Precedents: Jewish Participation in European and American Socialist Movements

Jewish involvement in socialist and revolutionary movements has deep roots, particularly in Europe and the United States. Throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, as industrial capitalism developed and imperialism expanded, Jews found themselves at the crossroads of profound societal changes. Marginalized both socially and economically in many countries, Jewish populations in Europe were often confined to ghettoized communities, facing centuries of anti-Semitic prejudice, discriminatory laws, and exclusion from mainstream political and economic life. These factors made many Jews sympathetic to revolutionary ideologies that promised to challenge the status quo, confront inequality, and offer a vision of a more just society.

The European socialist movement of the late 19th century provided fertile ground for Jewish participation. Many Jews were drawn to the ideals of Marxism, which criticized capitalism and proposed an international workers' revolution as a path toward a classless, equitable society. The Jewish labor movement, particularly in Eastern Europe, became intertwined with socialist and Marxist causes. Jewish

intellectuals, workers, and activists contributed significantly to the rise of socialist parties, trade unions, and revolutionary movements across Europe.

One of the most prominent examples of Jewish involvement in revolutionary movements was the role Jews played in the Russian Revolution of 1917. Many of the leading figures in the Bolshevik Party, which led the revolution and established Soviet rule, were Jewish. Leon Trotsky (born Lev Bronstein), one of the most significant figures in the Bolshevik Revolution and the Civil War that followed, was a Jewish intellectual who rose to prominence as Lenin's closest collaborator. Trotsky was instrumental in organizing the Red Army and was one of the key architects of the Soviet state.

In addition to Trotsky, other Jewish revolutionaries played important roles in the early Soviet Union, though they often faced internal tensions regarding their Jewish identity. Figures like Grigory Zinoviev, Lev Kamenev, and Yakov Sverdlov held high-ranking positions within the Soviet government. Despite the early presence of Jews in the Soviet leadership, anti-Semitic currents persisted in Russia, both before and after the revolution, complicating the relationship between Jews and the Communist regime. Nonetheless, many Jews viewed the socialist revolution as a means of combating the systemic oppression they had faced under the czarist regime and saw the promise of Marxism as a way to achieve both personal and collective liberation.

Similarly, in the United States, Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe became heavily involved in the burgeoning labor movement and the American Socialist Party. Many Jewish immigrants who fled pogroms and persecution in Russia and Poland arrived in the U.S. with a strong background in socialist and labor activism. They brought these ideologies with them to the U.S., where they became active in organizing unions, strikes, and political movements to improve the conditions of the working class. Jews played key roles in unions such as the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU) and the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, which were critical in improving labor conditions for immigrant workers in the sweatshops of New York and other major cities.

2.2 Motivations for Jewish Involvement in Left-Wing and Revolutionary Causes: Social Justice, Anti-Fascism, Anti-Imperialism

The motivations for Jewish involvement in left-wing and revolutionary causes are deeply rooted in both historical experience and ideological alignment. Jewish communities, particularly in Europe, faced centuries of systemic discrimination, exclusion, and violence. This experience of marginalization naturally led many Jews to seek alternative political ideologies that promised to upend the oppressive social structures that had kept them on the fringes of society.

Social Justice: One of the central motivations for Jewish involvement in socialist movements was the pursuit of social justice. Marxist theory, with its focus on class struggle and the liberation of the working class, resonated with many Jews who had long been oppressed economically and socially. Marxism and socialism offered an intellectual framework that transcended ethnic and religious identity, focusing instead on the universal struggle for equality. For many Jews, these ideologies provided a path toward justice, not just for themselves, but for all marginalized and exploited people.

Anti-Fascism: Jewish participation in left-wing movements also intensified in response to the rise of fascism and anti-Semitic nationalism in the early 20th century. As fascist regimes rose to power in Italy, Germany, and other parts of Europe, Jews found themselves targeted as scapegoats for societal problems and were often subject to violent repression. The Nazi regime's virulent anti-Semitism, in particular, galvanized many Jews to actively participate in anti-fascist movements. The Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) became a focal point for many Jewish anti-fascists, who saw the struggle against Francisco Franco's forces as a broader fight against fascism in Europe. Thousands of Jewish volunteers joined the International Brigades, including the famed Abraham Lincoln Brigade, to fight against Franco's fascist forces in Spain. These Jewish anti-fascist fighters saw their participation as part of a global struggle against the forces of oppression and totalitarianism, both in Europe and beyond.

Anti-Imperialism: Another significant factor driving Jewish involvement in revolutionary movements was opposition to imperialism. As marginalized people living in empires that systematically oppressed various ethnic and social groups, Jews often found solidarity with other oppressed peoples, including colonized

nations. The anti-imperialist dimension of Marxist ideology, which called for the overthrow of colonialism and the liberation of colonized nations, resonated deeply with Jewish activists. Jewish intellectuals and revolutionaries saw their own struggle for survival and equality as part of a larger global fight against the forces of imperialism, capitalism, and exploitation. In this way, Jewish revolutionaries often aligned their causes with those of the global south, seeking to promote internationalism and solidarity among all oppressed peoples.

2.3 Notable Jewish Individuals in Global Communist and Socialist Movements

Throughout history, many Jewish intellectuals, activists, and leaders have played pivotal roles in revolutionary movements worldwide, transcending national borders and participating in struggles for liberation and equality across continents.

- **Karl Marx:** One of the most influential Jewish figures in global socialist history, Karl Marx (1818-1883), was the co-author of *The Communist Manifesto* and the intellectual father of Marxism. Although Marx himself did not place much emphasis on his Jewish identity, his analysis of class struggle and capitalism laid the foundation for socialist and communist movements around the world. Marx's ideas inspired multiple generations of revolutionaries, including Jewish activists who saw Marxism as a vehicle for both personal and societal liberation.
- **Leon Trotsky:** As mentioned earlier, Trotsky was one of the key figures in the Russian Revolution and played a major role in the creation of the Soviet Union. He was a leading military strategist and political thinker, and his theory of "permanent revolution" became a central tenet of international socialist theory. Trotsky's Jewish background and intellectual contributions had a profound impact on the trajectory of global communist movements, and he remains a pivotal figure in the history of Marxism.
- **Emma Goldman:** Emma Goldman (1869–1940) was a Russian-born Jewish anarchist who became one of the most prominent radical figures in American political history. A fierce advocate for workers' rights, women's emancipation, and free speech, Goldman fought against capitalist oppression in the U.S. and Europe. She traveled widely, spreading her message of anarchism and revolution, and became a global symbol of

Jewish involvement in radical politics. Her legacy endures as an emblem of the fight for individual freedom and social justice.

- **Rosa Luxemburg:** Rosa Luxemburg (1871–1919) was a Jewish Marxist theorist and revolutionary leader who played a significant role in the socialist movement in Germany and Poland. Luxemburg was a co-founder of the Spartacist League, which later became the Communist Party of Germany. Known for her eloquent critiques of capitalism, imperialism, and nationalism, Luxemburg's writings and political leadership left an indelible mark on international socialist theory. Her assassination during the failed Spartacist uprising in 1919 made her a martyr for the cause of revolution and left-wing politics.
- **Sidney Rittenberg:** As previously mentioned, Sidney Rittenberg was an American Jewish communist who became deeply involved with the Chinese Communist Party during its rise to power. Rittenberg's work as a translator and propagandist was crucial in promoting the CCP's message to Western audiences. His unique role as an insider in the Chinese Communist movement exemplifies the global reach of Jewish involvement in revolutionary politics.
- **Israel Epstein:** Epstein, another Jewish intellectual involved in China's Communist Revolution, made significant contributions to Chinese propaganda efforts. His work as a journalist and editor was instrumental in promoting the CCP's achievements to an international audience. Like Rittenberg, Epstein represents the global dimension of Jewish participation in revolutionary movements beyond Europe and North America.

These individuals, among many others, highlight the profound contributions of Jews to revolutionary causes across the world. Whether fighting for workers' rights, social equality, or the overthrow of oppressive regimes, Jewish revolutionaries played leading roles in the creation and advancement of socialist and communist movements globally. Their involvement in these movements was shaped by a combination of personal experiences with oppression and the intellectual appeal of Marxism, socialism, and anarchism as ideologies that promised a more just and equitable world.

3. Jewish Involvement in the Chinese Revolution

3.1 Key Jewish Figures in China During the Revolution

The Chinese Communist Revolution attracted a number of foreign nationals, including several prominent Jewish figures, who played key roles in supporting the Communist cause during Mao Zedong's rise to power. While the overall number of Jewish individuals involved in the revolution was small, their influence was disproportionately significant in areas such as media, propaganda, diplomacy, and cultural exchange. The most prominent Jewish figures in China during the revolution were Sidney Rittenberg and Israel Epstein. Though not Jewish himself, Rewi Alley, a New Zealander who was deeply involved in China's Communist efforts, worked closely with Jewish activists and was connected with Jewish groups in international communist circles.

Sidney Rittenberg:

Sidney Rittenberg, an American-born Jew, is perhaps the most notable Jewish figure involved in the Chinese Communist movement. Born in South Carolina in 1921, Rittenberg was drawn to left-wing politics at an early age, influenced by the plight of laborers and the racial segregation he witnessed in the American South. After joining the U.S. Army during World War II, Rittenberg was sent to China, where he became captivated by the Chinese Communist Party's ideology and the promise of a peasant-led revolution.

After the war, Rittenberg chose to stay in China and became deeply integrated into the Communist Party's activities. Fluent in both Mandarin and English, Rittenberg worked closely with the Chinese leadership, translating party documents and speeches into English for international audiences. He became a trusted advisor to Mao Zedong and other top leaders, even working for China's state-run radio and the *Xinhua* News Agency, where he helped craft the CCP's messaging to foreign audiences. Rittenberg's influence in the party's media operations was significant, as he helped shape how the Chinese revolution was portrayed to the rest of the world.

Despite his close ties to the CCP, Rittenberg was not immune to the political purges that characterized Mao's reign. He was imprisoned twice during his time in China, once during the Anti-Rightist Campaign in the late 1950s and again during the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s. Despite this, Rittenberg remained

committed to the Communist cause and lived in China for over 35 years. His contributions to the revolution, particularly in terms of international diplomacy and media, were substantial and reflect the important role that foreign nationals, including Jews, played in supporting China's Communist movement.

Israel Epstein:

Israel Epstein, another prominent Jewish figure in China during the revolution, was a Polish-born journalist who became one of the most influential foreign voices in promoting the Chinese Communist cause. Born in 1915 in Warsaw to Jewish parents who fled to China to escape persecution, Epstein spent much of his early life in China, where he witnessed the country's struggles with imperialism, warlordism, and Japanese occupation.

Epstein's journalism career began in the 1930s when he worked as a correspondent for various international publications, covering China's turbulent political landscape. During World War II, Epstein joined the Chinese resistance against the Japanese occupation and became a fervent supporter of the Communist Party. His fluency in both English and Chinese made him a valuable asset to the CCP, particularly in its efforts to communicate its goals and achievements to the outside world.

In 1951, after the establishment of the People's Republic of China, Epstein became a Chinese citizen and continued his work as a journalist and editor for the English-language magazine *China Reconstructs* (later renamed *China Today*). This publication, aimed at international audiences, was designed to showcase the accomplishments of the Communist Party, promote the idea of socialist development in China, and counteract Western criticisms of the regime. Epstein's role in editing and writing for *China Reconstructs* was critical in shaping the narrative that China presented to the world, particularly during the early years of Communist rule.

Epstein's long career in China spanned several decades, and his contributions to Chinese media and propaganda were significant. Like Rittenberg, Epstein was deeply committed to the Communist cause and remained in China until his death in 2005. His work as a journalist and propagandist made him one of the most visible foreign advocates for China's revolution, and his Jewish background added

a layer of complexity to his identity as both an internationalist and a staunch supporter of Maoist socialism.

Rewi Alley (Not Jewish but Associated with Jewish Groups):

Rewi Alley, though not Jewish himself, was closely associated with Jewish activists and played a pivotal role in China's revolutionary efforts. Born in New Zealand in 1897, Alley moved to China in 1927 and became one of the most prominent foreign supporters of the Chinese Communist Party. Alley was instrumental in setting up industrial cooperatives in rural China, helping to modernize the country's industrial base while also promoting socialist ideals of self-sufficiency and collective ownership. His efforts aligned with the CCP's broader goals of empowering the peasantry and building a socialist economy.

Alley's work in China earned him the respect and admiration of Communist leaders, and he became a key figure in promoting Sino-Western solidarity. Though not Jewish, Alley was closely connected to Jewish intellectuals and activists in China and internationally. He worked alongside figures like Israel Epstein and other Jewish sympathizers of the Communist movement, and his internationalist outlook mirrored that of many Jewish revolutionaries who saw China's struggle as part of a larger global fight against imperialism and capitalism.

3.2 Contributions to the Communist Cause in China: Media, Translation, Diplomacy, and Cultural Exchange

Jewish involvement in China's Communist revolution was multifaceted, with key figures contributing to a range of areas, including media, translation, diplomacy, and cultural exchange. These contributions were critical in shaping both China's internal and external perceptions of its revolution, as Jewish intellectuals helped bridge the gap between the CCP and the international community.

Media and Propaganda:

One of the most significant contributions of Jewish figures like Rittenberg and Epstein was in the realm of media and propaganda. Both men were involved in shaping how the Chinese revolution was portrayed to the world, working within the Communist Party's media apparatus to craft a narrative that emphasized the CCP's commitment to social justice, anti-imperialism, and national liberation. Rittenberg's work at *Xinhua* News Agency and Epstein's role at *China Reconstructs* were crucial in promoting the CCP's message to Western audiences, particularly

during a time when the Cold War was intensifying and the Western media often portrayed the Chinese Communists in a negative light.

These efforts at media and propaganda helped to build international support for the Chinese Communist movement and counteract the negative portrayals of Maoist China that were common in Western media. Jewish intellectuals like Rittenberg and Epstein played a key role in this process, using their fluency in both Chinese and English to communicate the goals and achievements of the revolution to foreign audiences. Their work contributed to the CCP's broader strategy of using soft power and cultural diplomacy to gain international legitimacy.

Translation and Communication:

Jewish intellectuals also contributed to the Communist cause through their work in translation and communication. Sidney Rittenberg's fluency in Mandarin allowed him to serve as a translator for top CCP leaders, helping to communicate the party's message to foreign diplomats, journalists, and political leaders. His role as a translator was particularly important in the CCP's interactions with Western audiences, as he was able to provide a bridge between the Chinese leadership and foreign observers. This work in translation not only facilitated diplomatic relations but also helped the CCP craft its international image.

Diplomacy and International Advocacy:

In addition to their contributions to media and translation, Jewish figures like Rittenberg and Epstein were also involved in diplomacy and international advocacy on behalf of the CCP. Epstein's work as a journalist often involved interacting with foreign diplomats and journalists, promoting the Communist cause and countering Western narratives about China. Similarly, Rittenberg's close ties to Mao and other top leaders allowed him to serve as an informal diplomat, representing the CCP's interests to foreign audiences and advocating for international solidarity with the Chinese revolution.

Cultural Exchange:

Jewish intellectuals also played a role in fostering cultural exchange between China and the rest of the world. Figures like Epstein and Alley helped to promote Chinese culture and values to foreign audiences, while also introducing Chinese leaders to Western intellectual traditions. This cultural exchange was a key

component of the CCP's broader efforts to build international support for its revolution, as it helped to create a narrative of China as a progressive, forward-thinking nation that was leading the global fight against imperialism.

3.3 Evaluation of the Scale of Jewish Involvement in China's Communist Movement: Fact versus Myth

While Jewish individuals like Sidney Rittenberg and Israel Epstein played important roles in China's Communist revolution, the claim that 85-90% of foreigners who supported the CCP were Jewish is an exaggeration. This myth likely arises from the prominent visibility of certain Jewish figures in the revolution's media and diplomatic efforts, which may have contributed to an inflated perception of Jewish involvement.

In reality, foreign involvement in China's Communist revolution was diverse, with individuals from a range of nationalities and backgrounds supporting the CCP. Soviet advisors played a significant role in providing military and logistical support, while other leftist intellectuals from Europe and the United States contributed to the revolution in various capacities. While Jewish individuals were certainly active in supporting the CCP, they were part of a larger internationalist movement that included people from many different backgrounds.

The myth of overwhelming Jewish involvement in China's Communist movement likely stems from a combination of factors, including the high-profile roles of figures like Rittenberg and Epstein, as well as the broader association of Jews with leftist and revolutionary movements in the 20th century. While Jewish intellectuals did play an important role in shaping the CCP's media and diplomatic efforts, their involvement should be understood as part of a larger trend of foreign support for revolutionary movements during the Cold War, rather than as an overwhelming majority of foreign participation.

In conclusion, Jewish involvement in China's Communist revolution was significant, but it should be seen in the context of broader international support for the CCP. Figures like Sidney Rittenberg and Israel Epstein made important contributions to the revolution, particularly in the realms of media, diplomacy, and cultural exchange. However, the scale of Jewish involvement in the revolution has often been overstated, and it is important to place these contributions in their proper historical context.

4. The Origins and Context of the '85-90% Jewish Foreigners' Claim

4.1 Exploration of Where This Claim Originated and How It Has Been Perpetuated

The claim that 85 to 90 percent of the foreigners who supported the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) during its rise to power were Jewish is a striking statistic, but it lacks a strong foundation in historical evidence. While it is clear that several notable Jewish individuals played visible and influential roles in the Chinese Communist movement, this exaggerated figure seems to have emerged as part of a mythic narrative that magnifies the role of Jewish foreigners in the revolution. Understanding the origins and perpetuation of this claim requires a closer look at both the historical context and the ideological biases that may have contributed to its spread.

One of the most likely origins of this claim is the broader association between Jewish intellectuals and revolutionary movements, particularly communism, in the early to mid-20th century. Jewish involvement in socialist and communist movements was indeed substantial, especially in Europe, where Jews like Karl Marx, Rosa Luxemburg, Leon Trotsky, and Emma Goldman played key roles in advancing leftist ideologies. This historical reality may have contributed to a generalization that Jews were similarly dominant in revolutionary efforts outside Europe, including in China.

The perception of disproportionate Jewish involvement in revolutionary movements was further shaped by political and cultural narratives of the time. In the mid-20th century, Jews were often depicted as key players in global communism—both by leftists who admired their contributions and by anti-communists who used this perception to fuel anti-Semitic conspiracy theories. The fact that prominent Jewish figures like Sidney Rittenberg and Israel Epstein were deeply involved in China's Communist movement reinforced this notion, even though the actual number of Jewish participants was small compared to the broader pool of foreign supporters.

Moreover, the claim may have been perpetuated through the retelling of individual stories, particularly in memoirs, biographies, and documentaries that focused on the contributions of specific Jewish individuals. Over time, the repetition of these stories, combined with the visibility of Jewish intellectuals in

China, may have led to the assumption that the majority of foreign participants in the revolution were Jewish. The figure of 85-90% may have been derived from anecdotal observations or exaggerations rather than a systematic analysis of the historical record.

4.2 Analysis of Sources, Documentaries, and Memoirs, Such as *The Revolutionary Documentary on Sidney Rittenberg*

One of the sources that has helped perpetuate the narrative of significant Jewish involvement in China's Communist revolution is the 2011 documentary *The Revolutionary*, which focuses on the life of Sidney Rittenberg. Directed by Irv Drasnin, Lucy Ostrander, and Don Sellers, the documentary explores Rittenberg's journey as a Jewish-American who became deeply embedded in the Chinese Communist Party, working closely with Mao Zedong and other top leaders.

Rittenberg's story is compelling for several reasons. As a foreigner who achieved a high level of trust and influence within the CCP, he represents an extraordinary case of cross-cultural political collaboration. His work as a translator and propagandist, particularly in shaping China's international media efforts, positioned him as a key figure in the CCP's outreach to Western audiences. The documentary highlights Rittenberg's contributions to the revolution while also examining his personal struggles, including his imprisonment during Mao's political purges.

While *The Revolutionary* provides valuable insights into Rittenberg's life and the broader context of foreign involvement in the Chinese Communist movement, it also contributes to the perception that Jewish individuals were disproportionately represented in the revolution. Rittenberg's prominence in the documentary, combined with the focus on his Jewish background, may have led some viewers to conclude that Jews played a larger role in the revolution than they actually did. However, the documentary does not provide a systematic analysis of the overall composition of foreign supporters in China, nor does it offer evidence to support the claim that 85-90% of these foreigners were Jewish.

In addition to *The Revolutionary*, other memoirs and biographies of Jewish intellectuals involved in the Chinese revolution have helped perpetuate this narrative. Israel Epstein's memoirs, for instance, offer a detailed account of his involvement in China's Communist movement and his deep commitment to the

cause. Epstein's life story, like Rittenberg's, reflects the broader trend of Jewish intellectuals supporting revolutionary movements around the world. While these memoirs provide important historical insights, they may also contribute to the myth of overwhelming Jewish participation in the Chinese revolution by focusing on individual stories rather than the broader historical context.

4.3 Critique of the Statistic: Is There Any Evidence to Support Such a High Figure?

Upon closer examination, the claim that 85-90% of the foreigners who supported the CCP were Jewish appears to be an exaggeration without strong historical evidence to back it up. While it is true that several Jewish individuals played significant roles in the revolution, they were part of a much larger and more diverse group of foreign supporters, which included people from many different nationalities, ethnicities, and ideological backgrounds.

Foreign Involvement in the Chinese Revolution:

The Chinese Communist movement attracted foreign supporters from a variety of countries, including the Soviet Union, the United States, Europe, and even some from neighboring Asian countries. Soviet advisors, in particular, played a major role in providing military and logistical support to the CCP, especially in the final years of the Chinese Civil War. Soviet involvement was driven by geopolitical interests, as the USSR sought to expand its influence in East Asia and counter American support for the Nationalist government.

In addition to the Soviets, foreign journalists, diplomats, and political activists from Europe and the United States also supported the CCP in various ways. Figures like Edgar Snow, the American journalist who authored *Red Star Over China*, helped raise international awareness about the Chinese Communist cause. Snow's book was one of the first sympathetic accounts of the CCP to reach Western audiences, and it played a significant role in shaping how foreigners viewed the Chinese revolution.

The Role of Jewish Intellectuals:

While Jewish individuals like Rittenberg and Epstein were highly visible in the Chinese Communist movement, they were far from constituting the majority of foreign supporters. The 85-90% figure likely comes from anecdotal observations or ideological narratives rather than any documented study or census of foreign

involvement. It is possible that in certain circles of foreign supporters, Jewish individuals were overrepresented due to their historical involvement in left-wing and revolutionary movements, but this does not translate into an overwhelming majority of foreign participation overall.

Moreover, many of the most prominent foreign supporters of the CCP were not Jewish. Rewi Alley, for example, was a New Zealander who played a key role in China's industrial cooperatives and was deeply involved in the Communist movement. Soviet advisors, who formed a critical component of the CCP's foreign support, were also largely non-Jewish, and their contributions were essential to the CCP's military success during the civil war.

Why the Statistic Persists:

The persistence of the 85-90% statistic likely reflects a combination of factors, including the visibility of Jewish intellectuals in China, the broader association of Jews with communist and revolutionary movements, and the power of anecdotal storytelling. In many cases, individuals like Rittenberg and Epstein became symbols of foreign support for the Chinese revolution, and their prominence may have led to an overestimation of the overall Jewish involvement.

Additionally, the narrative of overwhelming Jewish involvement in revolutionary movements has often been used—both by left-wing supporters and right-wing critics—to underscore the perceived influence of Jews in global politics. On the left, Jewish involvement is often celebrated as evidence of the Jewish commitment to social justice and anti-imperialism. On the right, however, such narratives have sometimes been used to fuel anti-Semitic conspiracy theories about Jewish control of international communism. These competing narratives have contributed to the persistence of the statistic, even in the absence of concrete evidence to support it.

In conclusion, while Jewish individuals made important contributions to China's Communist revolution, the claim that 85-90% of foreign supporters were Jewish is not supported by the historical record. Jewish participation should be seen as part of a broader trend of international support for the CCP, which included a wide range of foreign nationals from different backgrounds. The persistence of this exaggerated figure likely stems from the prominence of certain Jewish figures and

the broader cultural associations between Jews and revolutionary movements, rather than any documented facts.

5. Jewish Influence Versus Broader International Support

5.1 Examination of the Broader Group of Foreigners Who Supported Chinese Communism

While Jewish individuals like Sidney Rittenberg and Israel Epstein played prominent roles in supporting the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), they were part of a much broader group of foreign nationals who contributed to the rise of communism in China. Foreign support for the CCP came from a wide array of individuals and groups, driven by ideological solidarity with the communist cause, anti-imperialist motivations, and geopolitical interests. These foreigners provided critical support in areas such as military advising, diplomacy, propaganda, and material assistance. However, their numbers and influence were diverse, with many different nationalities and ideological backgrounds represented.

Soviet Advisors and Military Support:

The most significant foreign support for the Chinese Communist movement came from the Soviet Union, which provided the CCP with military, logistical, and financial backing throughout much of the Chinese Civil War (1927–1949). The Soviets had a vested interest in seeing a communist government come to power in China, not only because of ideological alignment but also for strategic reasons. The USSR sought to expand its sphere of influence in East Asia and counter the growing presence of the United States and its ally, the Kuomintang (KMT).

From the 1920s onwards, Soviet advisors worked closely with Chinese communists, providing them with crucial military training and weapons. While the Soviet Union often balanced its support between the CCP and the KMT during different periods of the conflict (depending on the larger geopolitical situation), its contribution to the CCP was instrumental in shaping the party's military strategies and eventual victory. In particular, Soviet military assistance was vital during the later stages of the Chinese Civil War, when Mao's forces were able to capture key cities and regions. Soviet aid included arms, training for Chinese

officers, and intelligence sharing, all of which gave the CCP a decisive advantage over the Nationalist forces of Chiang Kai-shek.

European Leftists and Political Activists:

In addition to Soviet support, many European leftists, especially those affiliated with communist and socialist parties, expressed solidarity with the Chinese Communist cause. These sympathizers were part of the broader international communist movement, which saw the rise of communism in China as part of a global struggle against capitalism and imperialism. While many European leftists did not have direct involvement in China, they contributed in various ways, including organizing support for the CCP through international communist networks, advocating for the Chinese revolution in European political discourse, and providing financial aid through communist organizations.

A notable group of European communists also participated directly in the Chinese revolution, offering their expertise in media, education, and propaganda. For example, many foreign journalists traveled to China to document the CCP's activities and promote their cause to Western audiences. One such figure was the British journalist James Bertram, who reported on the Chinese revolution and helped to shape international perceptions of the CCP. These individuals played a key role in building international sympathy for the CCP's struggle and countering the negative portrayals of communism that were common in Western media.

American Leftists and Sympathizers:

In the United States, leftist intellectuals, journalists, and political activists also took an interest in the Chinese revolution. Although the U.S. government officially supported the Nationalist government of Chiang Kai-shek, many American leftists saw the CCP as a more authentic representative of the Chinese people's interests, particularly in its anti-imperialist and pro-peasant policies. Figures like Agnes Smedley and Edgar Snow were among the most prominent American sympathizers of the CCP.

Edgar Snow's book *Red Star Over China*, published in 1937, was particularly influential in shaping Western perceptions of Mao Zedong and the CCP. Snow's firsthand account of the Long March and his interviews with Mao and other communist leaders helped present the CCP as a legitimate revolutionary force that was working to liberate China from feudalism, imperialism, and the KMT's

corrupt rule. Snow's sympathetic portrayal of Mao and his comrades helped build international support for the Chinese communists, particularly among Western leftists who saw the CCP as part of the broader global struggle against capitalism and fascism.

Agnes Smedley, an American journalist and activist, also played a significant role in promoting the Chinese Communist cause. She was deeply involved in the Chinese revolutionary movement and maintained close relationships with communist leaders. Her writings and activism helped raise awareness about the CCP's struggle and contributed to international efforts to provide aid to China during the war against Japan and the civil war with the Nationalists.

5.2 Comparison of Jewish Involvement with That of Other Nationalities or Ideological Groups

While Jewish intellectuals and activists like Sidney Rittenberg and Israel Epstein made important contributions to the Chinese Communist movement, their involvement should be seen in the context of a much larger and more diverse group of foreign supporters. In comparison to the Soviets, who provided the most critical military and logistical aid, and the broader group of leftists from Europe and the United States, the Jewish contribution was more focused on areas such as media, translation, diplomacy, and cultural exchange.

Military and Strategic Contributions:

The role of Soviet advisors and the military aid they provided to the CCP far outweighed the contributions of Jewish intellectuals in terms of direct impact on the outcome of the revolution. Soviet military experts helped train CCP officers, and Soviet weaponry supplied the communist forces during key battles in the late 1940s. The Soviet Union's involvement was not only significant in terms of material support but also in shaping the CCP's overall military strategy. Without this backing, it is unlikely that the CCP would have been able to defeat the Nationalists and take control of China.

In contrast, Jewish figures like Rittenberg and Epstein contributed more to the CCP's media and propaganda efforts. While these contributions were important for shaping international perceptions of the CCP, they did not have the same immediate, tangible impact on the military success of the revolution as the Soviet contributions. Jewish involvement was primarily intellectual and ideological,

rather than material or strategic, which makes it important but not decisive in the CCP's ultimate victory.

Intellectual and Cultural Contributions:

Where Jewish intellectuals did have a disproportionate influence was in shaping the CCP's narrative to the outside world. Sidney Rittenberg's work as a translator and propagandist helped to communicate the CCP's message to Western audiences, particularly during critical periods when China was seeking international legitimacy. Rittenberg's close ties to Mao Zedong and other top CCP leaders gave him a unique position of influence within the party's media apparatus. Similarly, Israel Epstein's work as a journalist and editor for *China Reconstructs* helped to promote the CCP's accomplishments to foreign readers, particularly in the English-speaking world.

In this sense, Jewish intellectuals played a key role in the CCP's diplomatic efforts, helping to build a positive image of the Chinese revolution abroad. Their contributions helped to counter Western narratives that portrayed the CCP as a radical and illegitimate force. However, while this media work was valuable, it was part of a broader effort that included non-Jewish foreign journalists, diplomats, and political activists. The contributions of figures like Edgar Snow and Rewi Alley were equally important in promoting the CCP's cause internationally.

Geopolitical Contributions:

In terms of broader geopolitical support, the involvement of Jewish intellectuals was relatively limited compared to the contributions of the Soviet Union and other foreign governments. While individuals like Rittenberg and Epstein were influential in shaping public perceptions, the material and strategic aid provided by the Soviets had a much more direct impact on the outcome of the revolution. The Soviet Union's support for the CCP, both during the civil war and in the immediate aftermath of the revolution, was critical in ensuring the survival and consolidation of the communist government.

5.3 Contextualizing the Role of Foreign Involvement: How Much Did It Actually Influence the Outcome of China's Communist Victory?

Foreign involvement in the Chinese Communist revolution was significant, but it should be seen as a complementary force to the domestic factors that ultimately led to the CCP's victory. While foreign advisors, journalists, and political activists

contributed to the CCP's success, the revolution was primarily driven by Chinese internal dynamics, particularly Mao Zedong's strategy of protracted guerrilla warfare and the CCP's ability to win support from China's rural peasantry.

Domestic Factors as the Primary Driver:

The CCP's victory was largely the result of its ability to mobilize mass support among China's rural population. Mao's emphasis on land reform and his promises to redistribute land to the peasants won the CCP a large and loyal base of supporters. This popular support allowed the CCP to sustain its guerrilla warfare campaign against the Nationalist forces, even when outnumbered and outgunned. Mao's strategy of using rural areas as bases of support, while gradually encircling urban centers, proved effective in undermining the Nationalist government, which was increasingly viewed as corrupt and disconnected from the needs of ordinary Chinese citizens.

While foreign support was important, particularly in terms of Soviet military aid and the diplomatic efforts of foreign sympathizers, it was the CCP's internal strategy and its ability to galvanize popular support that were the decisive factors in its victory. Foreign involvement, including that of Jewish intellectuals, should therefore be seen as a secondary, though valuable, contribution to the revolution's success.

The Role of Media and Propaganda:

The contributions of Jewish intellectuals like Rittenberg and Epstein were particularly important in the realm of media and propaganda, helping to shape international perceptions of the CCP. These efforts were critical in countering Western narratives that depicted the Chinese communists as a dangerous and illegitimate force. By promoting the CCP's accomplishments and framing the revolution as part of a broader global struggle against imperialism, Jewish intellectuals and other foreign sympathizers helped to build international legitimacy for Mao's government.

However, while this media work was valuable, it should be contextualized as part of a broader foreign support network that included journalists, diplomats, and political activists from many different backgrounds. Jewish intellectuals were part of this international movement, but they were not the dominant force in shaping foreign perceptions of the Chinese revolution.

The Soviet Union's Decisive Role:

Ultimately, the most decisive foreign contribution to the CCP's victory came from the Soviet Union. Without Soviet military aid and strategic support, it is unlikely that the CCP would have been able to defeat the better-equipped Nationalist forces. The Soviet Union's material contributions, combined with Mao's effective military strategy and the CCP's mass popular support, were the key factors in the communist victory.

In conclusion, while Jewish intellectuals made important contributions to the Chinese Communist revolution, particularly in terms of media and cultural exchange, their involvement should be seen as part of a much larger and more diverse group of foreign supporters. The ultimate success of the CCP was driven primarily by domestic factors, with foreign support playing a complementary, though important, role. Jewish involvement, while significant, did not constitute the overwhelming majority of foreign participation, and the narrative that it did so is an exaggeration.

6. The Legacy of Jewish Involvement in China's Revolution

6.1 How Jewish Contributions Are Remembered (or Forgotten) in the Context of Chinese History

The legacy of Jewish involvement in China's Communist Revolution is complex and, in many ways, understated or forgotten in the broader narrative of Chinese history. While figures like Sidney Rittenberg and Israel Epstein played notable roles in shaping international perceptions of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), their contributions, along with those of other Jewish individuals, are not widely emphasized in mainstream Chinese historical accounts. This is partly because foreign participation in the revolution is often overshadowed by the dominant narrative of Mao Zedong's leadership, the resilience of the Chinese peasantry, and the CCP's successful struggle against both internal and external adversaries.

In the official Chinese historiography, foreign support is generally acknowledged but not given extensive attention. The contributions of Soviet advisors, foreign journalists, and political sympathizers are recognized, but they tend to occupy a secondary place in the grand narrative of the revolution. This marginalization of

foreign participants applies to Jewish individuals as well, whose roles were often in media, propaganda, and diplomacy rather than in the direct military and strategic efforts that secured the CCP's victory. As a result, their contributions have been largely relegated to the periphery of Chinese historical memory.

Additionally, the Jewish intellectuals who were involved in the revolution often operated behind the scenes. Figures like Rittenberg and Epstein worked within the CCP's media apparatus, helping to shape the narrative for international audiences rather than playing central roles in the internal decision-making processes of the party. This made their contributions less visible in the domestic Chinese context, further diminishing their recognition in official accounts of the revolution.

In recent decades, there has been some renewed interest in the role of foreigners, including Jewish intellectuals, in China's revolutionary history. Documentaries like *The Revolutionary*, which chronicles the life of Sidney Rittenberg, and memoirs written by foreign participants have helped to bring these stories back into the public consciousness, albeit primarily for Western audiences. In China itself, however, the recognition of Jewish involvement in the revolution remains limited, and figures like Rittenberg and Epstein are not widely celebrated or remembered as central contributors to the CCP's success.

6.2 The Influence of Jewish Involvement on Post-Revolutionary Relations Between China, Israel, and the Jewish Diaspora

The role of Jewish individuals in China's Communist Revolution has had an interesting, albeit indirect, influence on post-revolutionary relations between China, Israel, and the Jewish diaspora. While Jewish participation in the revolution was relatively small in scale, the presence of Jewish intellectuals like Rittenberg and Epstein did help to build bridges between China and the broader international Jewish community, particularly in terms of media and cultural exchange. However, the geopolitical context of the Cold War, combined with China's foreign policy alignment, meant that relations between China and Israel, as well as with the Jewish diaspora, remained complicated for much of the 20th century.

Early Diplomatic Relations Between China and Israel:

In the early years of the People's Republic of China (PRC), relations between China

and Israel were tenuous. Despite the fact that both countries were established around the same time (Israel in 1948 and the PRC in 1949), China's alignment with the Soviet Union and its broader support for anti-imperialist and anti-colonial movements in the developing world made it difficult for China to forge close ties with Israel, which was viewed by many socialist and Third World countries as aligned with Western imperialist powers. Additionally, China's support for Arab nationalist movements and its opposition to Israeli policies regarding Palestine further strained relations between the two countries.

However, the presence of Jewish intellectuals like Rittenberg and Epstein in China may have played a subtle role in shaping how China viewed the Jewish diaspora. Epstein, in particular, was instrumental in promoting China's accomplishments to international audiences, including in Jewish circles. His work as an editor for *China Reconstructs* helped to portray the CCP's revolution as part of a broader struggle for justice and equality, themes that resonated with many Jewish intellectuals around the world who had a long history of involvement in left-wing and revolutionary movements.

The Jewish Diaspora's Perception of China:

Within the Jewish diaspora, the involvement of Jewish intellectuals in China's revolution had a mixed impact. On the one hand, figures like Rittenberg and Epstein were seen as part of a broader tradition of Jewish involvement in revolutionary movements, and their participation in the Chinese revolution was viewed as a continuation of the Jewish commitment to social justice and anti-imperialism. On the other hand, the geopolitical realities of the Cold War and the Arab-Israeli conflict complicated Jewish perceptions of China, particularly as China became a vocal supporter of Palestinian nationalism and a critic of Israeli policies in the Middle East.

For many Jews, particularly those in the United States and Europe, China's revolutionary model was admired for its anti-imperialist stance and its success in lifting millions of people out of poverty. However, the alignment of China with the Soviet Union and later with Arab states during the Cold War created a degree of tension between the Jewish diaspora, especially in the West, and the PRC. The involvement of Jewish intellectuals in China's revolution did little to overcome these broader geopolitical challenges, and for much of the 20th century, the

relationship between China and the Jewish diaspora remained complicated by global political alignments.

Modern Relations Between China and Israel:

In recent decades, relations between China and Israel have improved significantly, driven by shared economic interests and mutual concerns over regional stability and security. While the historical involvement of Jewish individuals in China's Communist Revolution is not a major factor in these modern relations, the broader legacy of Jewish contributions to Chinese culture and media during the revolutionary period does reflect a long-standing connection between the two peoples. As China continues to expand its diplomatic and economic ties with Israel, the historical contributions of Jewish intellectuals like Epstein may be viewed as part of a longer tradition of cultural exchange and mutual respect.

6.3 Reflection on How History Mythologizes Certain Figures or Groups, Using the Case of Jewish Foreigners in China as an Example

The legacy of Jewish involvement in China's Communist Revolution offers an instructive example of how history can mythologize certain figures or groups, often exaggerating their roles or contributions while simultaneously marginalizing others. The claim that 85-90% of the foreigners who supported the CCP were Jewish is one such example of historical mythmaking, a narrative that oversimplifies the complex reality of foreign involvement in the revolution. This myth likely arose from the high visibility of Jewish intellectuals like Rittenberg and Epstein, whose work in media and propaganda made them well-known figures in international circles, even if they were not representative of the broader foreign participation in the revolution.

The Creation of Historical Myths:

Historical myths often arise when the contributions of certain individuals or groups are magnified to fit ideological or political narratives. In the case of Jewish foreigners in China, their roles in shaping international perceptions of the CCP, particularly through media and cultural exchange, have been emphasized in ways that sometimes obscure the broader context of foreign support for the revolution. This mythologization is not unique to Jewish participants; similar narratives have been created around other foreign supporters of the CCP, such as

Soviet advisors or Western journalists, whose roles have also been exaggerated or simplified in popular accounts.

The creation of such myths serves several purposes. For some, emphasizing Jewish involvement in the Chinese revolution reinforces a narrative of Jewish intellectualism and internationalism, highlighting the Jewish commitment to social justice and anti-imperialism. For others, particularly critics of communism, the myth of disproportionate Jewish involvement may be used to fuel anti-Semitic conspiracy theories about Jewish control of global revolutionary movements. In both cases, the historical reality is more nuanced, and the mythologization of Jewish participation in the Chinese revolution often obscures the contributions of other foreign nationals who played equally important roles.

The Importance of Historical Accuracy:

In reflecting on the legacy of Jewish involvement in China's revolution, it is important to approach historical accounts with a critical eye, recognizing the ways in which certain figures or groups may be mythologized to serve broader narratives. The contributions of Jewish intellectuals like Rittenberg and Epstein should be acknowledged and celebrated for their importance, but they should also be contextualized within the larger framework of foreign support for the CCP, which included many individuals from different nationalities and ideological backgrounds.

The mythologization of Jewish involvement in China's revolution offers a reminder of the importance of historical accuracy and nuance. By examining the broader context of foreign participation in the revolution, we can gain a more complete understanding of the complex interactions between Chinese and foreign intellectuals, activists, and military advisors during one of the most significant political upheavals of the 20th century.

In conclusion, the legacy of Jewish involvement in China's Communist Revolution is a multifaceted and often underexplored aspect of both Chinese and Jewish history. While Jewish intellectuals played important roles in shaping international perceptions of the revolution, their contributions have often been overshadowed or mythologized in ways that obscure the broader reality of foreign support for the CCP. Understanding this legacy requires a careful examination of both the contributions of individual Jewish participants and the larger historical context in

which they operated, ensuring that their roles are remembered accurately and fairly.

7. Conclusion

7.1 Summary of Findings: The Role of Jews in the Chinese Communist Movement

The examination of Jewish involvement in the Chinese Communist movement reveals a significant, yet not dominant, contribution by Jewish intellectuals, activists, and sympathizers. Figures such as Sidney Rittenberg and Israel Epstein played notable roles in shaping the international narrative surrounding the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) during its rise to power. Their work in media, translation, diplomacy, and cultural exchange helped the CCP gain legitimacy and support from foreign audiences, especially in Western countries. However, the claim that 85-90% of foreigners who supported the CCP were Jewish is an exaggeration that does not align with historical evidence.

In reality, Jewish involvement was part of a broader international effort that included Soviet advisors, American and European leftists, and other foreign sympathizers who contributed to the CCP's success. The Soviet Union, in particular, provided critical military and logistical support that played a much larger role in the CCP's eventual victory over the Nationalist forces. Jewish intellectuals were influential in shaping the media and cultural narrative of the revolution, but their contributions were primarily in non-military realms, and they did not constitute the overwhelming majority of foreign support as some narratives suggest.

The myth of disproportionate Jewish involvement likely arose from the high visibility of Jewish figures in key positions related to media and propaganda. Their prominence in shaping the international perception of the CCP may have contributed to the inflated claims about the extent of Jewish participation in the Chinese Communist movement. This narrative has been perpetuated by both admirers of Jewish contributions to revolutionary movements and those who seek to exploit these contributions for ideological or conspiratorial purposes.

7.2 Final Thoughts on the Intersection of Myth, History, and Revolutionary Movements

The case of Jewish involvement in China's Communist Revolution highlights the complex relationship between myth, history, and revolutionary movements. Revolutionary periods are often fertile ground for myth-making, as the dramatic and ideological nature of these struggles lends itself to the creation of simplified or exaggerated narratives. In the case of China's revolution, the contributions of foreign nationals, including Jews, have been both elevated and diminished by different historical and ideological forces.

On one hand, the mythologization of Jewish involvement in revolutionary movements, including the Chinese Communist Revolution, reflects the long-standing association between Jews and left-wing intellectualism. Jews, often marginalized and oppressed throughout history, were naturally drawn to revolutionary ideologies that promised social justice, equality, and an end to systems of exploitation. This tradition of Jewish involvement in socialist and communist movements is well-documented in Europe and the United States, and it is not surprising that it would extend to China as well. However, the tendency to overemphasize Jewish contributions, particularly in the form of statistics like the 85-90% claim, distorts the reality of foreign support for the CCP and obscures the diverse array of individuals and groups who contributed to the Chinese revolution.

On the other hand, the creation and perpetuation of these myths can also serve more nefarious purposes. Anti-Semitic conspiracy theories have long sought to depict Jews as disproportionately influential in global political movements, particularly communism. The claim that Jews made up the vast majority of foreign supporters of the CCP could be co-opted by those who wish to promote the false narrative that Jews were somehow orchestrating global communism for their own benefit. Such conspiracy theories ignore the complex realities of revolutionary movements and reduce them to simplistic and harmful stereotypes.

The intersection of myth and history in revolutionary movements, therefore, requires careful scrutiny. While it is important to recognize the genuine contributions of individuals and groups, it is equally important to avoid oversimplifications that distort historical realities. In the case of Jewish

involvement in China's Communist Revolution, we must acknowledge the significant contributions of Jewish intellectuals and activists while also placing these contributions in their proper historical context, alongside the broader international and domestic forces that shaped the revolution's outcome.

7.3 Suggestions for Further Research

This exploration of Jewish involvement in the Chinese Communist Revolution opens up several avenues for further research, particularly in the realm of foreign influence in revolutionary China. Future scholarship could benefit from a more nuanced and comprehensive analysis of the various foreign nationals who supported the CCP, examining their contributions in relation to each other and to the broader context of the revolution. Some key areas for further investigation include:

- **Comparative Analysis of Foreign Contributions:** A deeper comparative study of foreign involvement in the Chinese Communist Revolution would provide a more balanced understanding of the contributions made by Jewish intellectuals, Soviet advisors, American leftists, and other foreign sympathizers. Such research could examine the specific roles played by each group and assess their relative impact on the outcome of the revolution. This would help clarify the extent to which Jewish individuals, as part of a broader internationalist movement, influenced the CCP's success.
- **The Role of Media and Propaganda in International Perceptions of the Chinese Revolution:** Jewish intellectuals like Rittenberg and Epstein were heavily involved in media and propaganda efforts on behalf of the CCP. Further research into how these media efforts shaped international perceptions of the Chinese revolution could provide valuable insights into the role of soft power in revolutionary movements. A focused study on how the CCP managed its international image and the contributions of foreign journalists, editors, and propagandists could shed light on the intersection between domestic politics and global public relations during revolutionary periods.
- **The Influence of Jewish Diaspora Politics on Revolutionary Movements:** The involvement of Jewish individuals in the Chinese Communist movement raises broader questions about the role of the Jewish diaspora

in global revolutionary movements. Future research could explore how Jewish intellectuals and activists in different parts of the world navigated their identities as both Jews and revolutionaries, particularly in the context of Cold War geopolitics and the evolving relationship between Jewish communities and socialist or communist movements. This line of inquiry could provide valuable insights into the ways in which diaspora politics intersected with revolutionary ideologies in the 20th century.

- **Revisiting the Historiography of Foreign Participation in the Chinese Revolution:** Finally, a broader reassessment of the historiography of foreign participation in China's revolution is needed. Much of the scholarship on this topic has focused on high-profile figures like Edgar Snow, Sidney Rittenberg, and Rewi Alley. A more comprehensive approach that includes lesser-known foreign contributors, as well as a reevaluation of the role played by Soviet advisors and international communist networks, could offer a more complete picture of how foreign involvement shaped the outcome of the Chinese Communist Revolution.

In conclusion, while Jewish involvement in China's Communist Revolution was significant, it was part of a larger international movement of foreign support for the CCP. Understanding the true nature of this involvement requires moving beyond simplistic narratives and engaging with the complexities of history. By doing so, we can better appreciate the contributions of Jewish intellectuals while also situating them within the broader context of the global struggle for socialism and communism in the 20th century. Further research in this area will not only deepen our understanding of the Chinese revolution but also shed light on the intricate web of international influences that shaped the revolutionary movements of the 20th century.

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These sources provide a broad historical context for Jewish participation in China's Communist Revolution, as well as the broader foreign involvement in the CCP's rise to power. They also offer insights into how Jewish figures like Sidney

Rittenberg and Israel Epstein contributed to the media, propaganda, and international diplomacy efforts of the CCP.