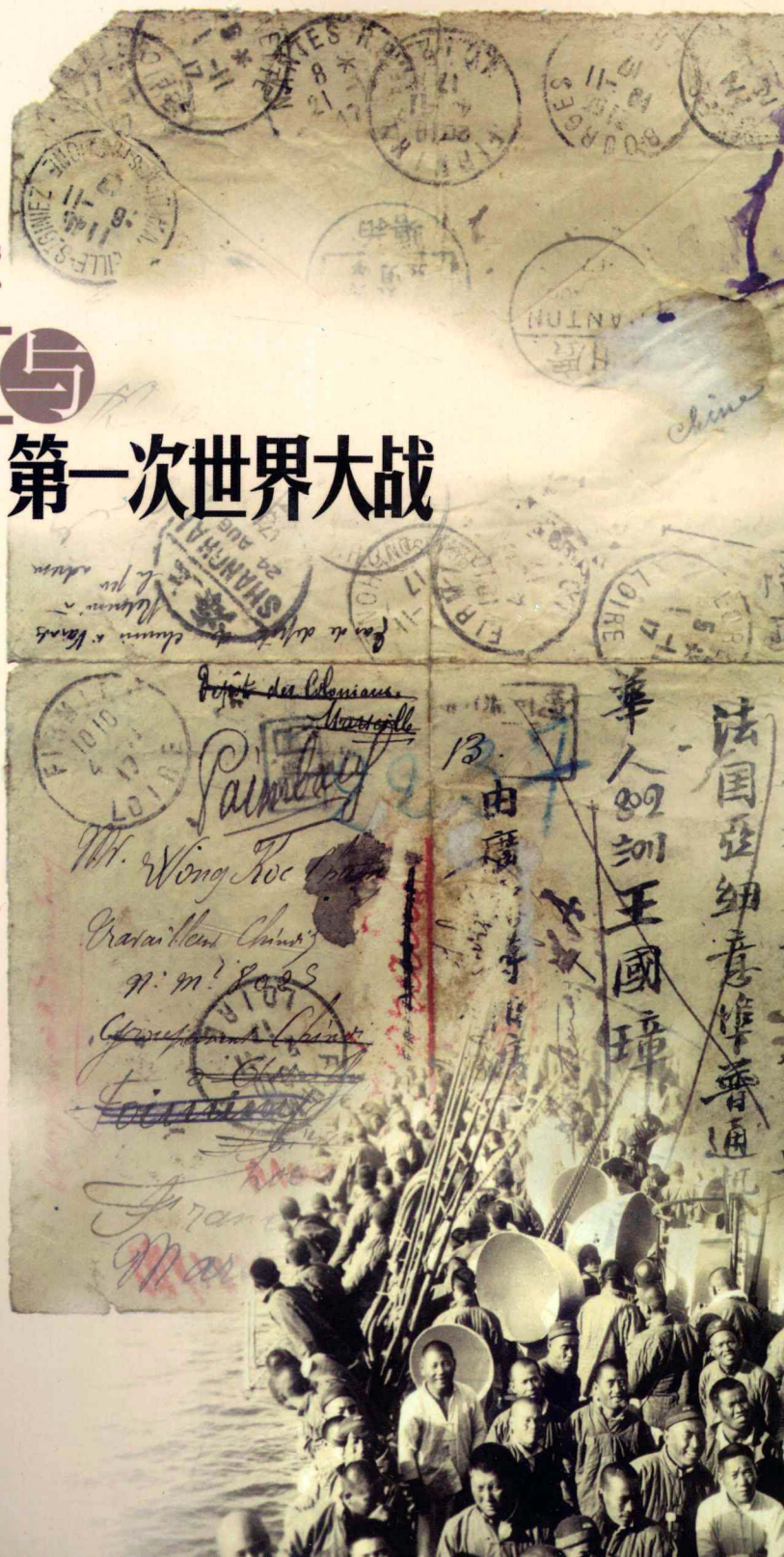


Chinese Labourers
and the First World War

中国劳工

张建国 主编

第一次世界大战



中国劳工与第一次世界大战

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序

第一次世界大战期间,十四万华工在英法两国政府的征召和中国政府的安排下,远涉重洋,作为苦力来到战火纷飞的欧洲,为协约国集团的所谓“文明之战”贡献“苦”与“力”。这是人类文明史上东西方交流的重要一章。但长期以来,中外学术界似乎将这一特殊群体遗忘了。我们不太明了他们为何而来,因何而去?在旅途中,在欧洲以及回国后,他们究竟又有怎样的经历?他们对那场“大战”(Great War)作出过什么贡献?他们对中华民族寻求新的国家认同及国际化发挥过什么作用?他们在中西交流史上又占有何等地位?

2007年春夏之交,我来到当年许多华工跨洋过海的起点——山东威海,试图为上述问题寻找答案。在与威海市档案局张建国局长的交流中我们谈到了抓住2008年国际社会纪念一战停战九十周年的契机,组织一次一战华工国际学术研讨会的必要性。张局长可谓“心有灵犀一点通”,雷厉风行,立即准备。一年后我们的会议在威海得以顺利举行,威海档案局全体同仁实在是功不可没。2008年是中国历史上一个重要的年份。这一年中国实现世纪梦想,成功举办了北京奥运会。这一年对我们这些一战华工研究者来说,也是一个重要里程碑。同年9月,来自欧洲、美洲、亚洲的各国学者、华工后代以及对华工历史有特殊联系及关切的同仁,在一战停战九十周年之际,济济一堂,参加世界上首次一战华工国际学术讨论会。这本论文集就是这次讨论会的结晶。

对于各篇论文的观点及得失,这里不予详评。见仁见智,读者自有评价。不言而喻的是,鉴于一战华工的跨国研究刚刚起步,本集有些论文或许稍显稚嫩,不够深入。有些领域,本应涉及,但乏人问津。还应提到的是,本论文集大多数论文集中在西线华工,对东线华工,特别是俄国所招华工,论文较少。许多课题更属空白,但非常重要。例如,东西线华

工的历史背景有无差别,贡献是否不同?华工归国后命运如何,留在国外的又发生了什么?这批华工对中国及世界史的意义如何?一战华工与勤工俭学的关系怎样?其与五四运动又有着怎样的联系?一战华工在中国移民史中的地位又是怎样?凡此种种,都是有待进一步探索的重要领域。我们希望通过此论文集的出版,向世界展示在该领域国际合作的初步成果。当然这是万里长征的第一步。路正长,我们期待国际学术界通力合作,把一战华工课题进一步深入。毕竟,华工虽然来自中国,但他们的历史属于世界。

令人高兴的是,威海一战华工会议已经产生了一定的影响,一战华工开始受到广泛关注。美国耶鲁大学杰伊·温特(Jay Winter)教授、法国一战研究中心安妮特·贝克(Annette Becker)教授、台湾“中央研究院”近代史所前所长陈三井研究员、香港中文大学丁欣豹博士等著名学者对会议多所勉励,赞誉有加。本次会议不仅吸引了众多职业学者,而且也吸引了中外政界、商界、媒体及驻华使节、华侨社团等方面的人士广泛参与。会议前后,比利时国家电视台、佛兰芒大区公共电视台、欧洲最大的网络视频新闻制作商 Zoom. in TV、中新社巴黎分社、《最新消息报》(欧洲)、《欧洲时报》、《星岛日报》、中国中央电视台、山东卫视、《大众日报》、《齐鲁晚报》、浙江卫视欧洲台、《中国档案报》、《中国档案》杂志、香港凤凰卫视等一批重要媒体都作了专题报道。中国中央电视台抓住该领域名家齐聚威海的有利时机,与威海档案局联合拍摄了6集大型纪录片《华工军团》,并于2009年五四运动九十周年前夕对外播出。北京的《中国档案》杂志发表了有关一战华工研究的系列采访文章。2010年,法国滨海大学(Université du Littoral Côte d'Opale)将与比利时佛兰德战地博物馆(In Flanders Museum)和比利时鲁汶大学(Katholieke Universiteit Leuven)以及设在法国的欧洲社会科学及人文研究所(Maison Européenne des Sciences de l'Homme et de la Société)联合举办一战华工学术会议。随着本论文集的出版,我们希望有更多学者投入到一战华工研究事业,以期不断有丰硕成果问世。我们也希望有更多团体向威海档案局学习,支持和资助一战华工研究,把一战华工研究进一步发扬光大。

徐国琦

2009年秋于香港大学

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Chinese Contract Workers in World War I: The Larger Context

Paul Bailey

Between 1916 and 1918 nearly 140,000 Chinese labourers (mainly from Shandong) were recruited by the British and French governments to make up for labour shortages in France as well as to release British dockworkers employed in French ports for military duty. Although France looked principally to its colonies for labour manpower (for example, recruiting 78,566 Algerians, 48,955 Vietnamese, and 35,506 Moroccans)^①, by the end of 1917 it had "imported" nearly 37,000 Chinese labourers. Those recruited by Britain constituted an even larger proportion of its overseas labour force utilised in France, organised into 195 "labour battalion" and designated the Chinese Labour Corps. Chinese workers totalled 96,000 (compared to 48,000 Indians, 21,000 South African blacks, and 15,000 Egyptians).^② During their sojourn in France these Chinese labourers were involved in a wide variety of war-related work such as unloading goods and raw materials (e. g. coal) in the docks, transportation, armaments and munitions production, machinery and equipment maintenance, road and aerodrome construction, and even burial of the war dead. At the same time, Czarist Russia between 1915 and 1917 recruited up to

① G. Cross, *Immigrant Workers in Industrial France* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983), pp. 35–36; J. Horne, "Immigrant Workers in France During World War I," *French Historical Studies* 14.1 (Spring 1985), p. 59. Altogether, nearly 223,000 workers were recruited by France from its colonies and China.

② M. Summerskill, *China at the Western Front* (London: Michael Summerskill, 1982), p. 163.

100,000 Chinese workers (most of whom, again, came from northern provinces such as Shandong) to work on the Murmansk railroad in the north or in the oil fields at Baku and coal mines of the Donets basin in the south. ①

As the victorious allies gathered in France for the Versailles Peace Conference to draw up the post-World War I settlement in the autumn of 1919, they were joined by the little noticed delegation from China. Having formally declared war on Germany in August 1917, and in recognition of its labour contribution to the allied war effort, China had earned the right to attend the conference—symbolising, in effect, *the first time* during the modern era that the western powers acquiesced in China's membership of the international community^② following nearly a century in which China had experienced repeated humiliation at the hands of western powers (and latterly Japan) and determined to enhance their commercial, economic and territorial privileges in the country. A member of the Chinese delegation composed the words of a song in honour of the indentured Chinese labourers, and which expressed a sense of vivid pride in the role they had played in the cause of world peace and harmony (and by extension representing a confident assertion of *China's* self-worth):

We, the children of Sacred China, whose fate lies in heaven, esteem the farmer and favour the artisan, but never resort to force.

Marching, marching, ever marching.

① Li Yongchang, "Zhongguo jindai fu'e huagong shulun" (An account of Chinese workers in Russia in the modern period), *Jindaishi yanjiu*, no. 3 (1987), p. 225; He Ping, "Eguo yuandong dichu huagong wenti zhi chutan" (A preliminary exploration of the Chinese worker question in the Russian Far East), *Haiwai huaren yanjiu*, no. 3 (1995), pp. 97–98. The large number of Shandong natives amongst those recruited in the Russian Far East was not surprising, given the fact that since the end of the nineteenth century thousands of adult men from the provinces of Shandong and Hebei had seasonally migrated to Manchuria (leaving in the spring and returning at Chinese New Year) as contract labourers. On the nature and impact of this annual migration movement (a key strategy to ensure family economic survival back home), see T. Gottschang and D. Lary, *Swallows and Settlers: The Great Migration from North China to Manchuria* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000).

② A point usefully made by Zhang Yongjin, *China in the International System 1918–1920* (London: Macmillan, 1991), p. 5.

All within the four seas are brothers.

We are an army of workers devoting ourselves to labour, in order to build peace for you, humanity. ^①

Yet despite the confidence expressed in this song concerning China's potentially new-found status in the international community, and the grandiose statement made several years later by T. Z. Tyau (a legal adviser to the Chinese delegation at the League of Nations Assembly) that the "honourable" role played by Chinese workers in the recent world war had prompted so much gratitude from the public and governments of Britain and France that "the world may be almost said to be lying at the Chinese labourer's feet"^②, nothing much changed in China's favour. ^③ Neither the former German concession area of Qingdao (captured by Japan shortly after it joined Britain in the war against Germany) was returned, nor the "unequal treaty system" substantially modified; at the same time, the anti-Chinese immigration legislation that had characterised politics in the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand before World War I continued unabated after 1918. ^④ The ensuing disappointment and anger in China helped fuel a mass protest movement in Beijing and other cities (the May Fourth Movement) spearheaded by intellectuals, students and urban workers that has conventionally been viewed as the beginnings of a mass nationalism in China.

Furthermore, the story of the indentured Chinese labourers in France has generally been relegated, at best, to a brief reference in histories of

① *La Politique de P'kin*, no. 8 (22 Feb. 1920) gives the text in Chinese and French. I have translated directly from the Chinese.

② T. Z. (Min-ch'ien) Tyau, *China Awakened* (New York: Macmillan, 1922), pp. 225—226.

③ Minor benefits China gained as a result of its support for the allies included the postponement of Boxer indemnity payments for five years, and a slight increase allowed in import tariff levels.

④ For information on anti-Chinese immigration legislation before and after World War I in the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, see L. Pan (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of the Chinese Overseas* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), pp. 234—239, 261—266, 274—275, 286—288.

the period or, at worst, virtually ignored. Classic English-language accounts of the May Fourth Movement or the origins of the Chinese labour movement, for example, only briefly refer to these Chinese workers^①, while, curiously, a recent analysis of China's "assertive diplomacy" during and after the Versailles Peace Conference makes no mention of them at all.^② Pioneering studies of China's diplomacy and role in World War I likewise made only the briefest of references to Chinese indentured labour in wartime France^③; a more recent study of the subject, although providing more narrative details of the recruitment in 1916–1917, does not place the episode in any larger or meaningful context, or elaborate on the actual experiences of Chinese workers in France.^④ A similar lacuna occurs in recent studies of global movements of indentured labour in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries on the one hand,^⑤ and labour mobilisation in World War I Europe on the other.^⑥

French-language scholarship on the subject has similarly been rather

① Chow Tse-tsung, *The May Fourth Movement: Intellectual Revolution in Modern China* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1960), pp. 37–40; J. Chesneaux, *The Chinese Labor Movement 1919–1927* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1968), pp. 138–140. A brief reference to Chinese workers in World War I France can also be found in J. Spence, *The Search for Modern China* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999, 2nd ed.), pp. 286–287. Spence bases his account entirely on M. Summerskill, *China on the Western Front* (London: Michael Summerskill, 1982), a non-scholarly and rather superficial work based only on a few English-language sources.

② Zhang Yongjin, *China in the International System 1918–1920* (London: Macmillan, 1991).

③ T. La Fargue, *China and the World War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1937), pp. 83–84; M. Chi, *China Diplomacy 1914–1918* (Cambridge, Mass.: East Asian Research Center, Harvard University, 1970), p. 129.

④ Xu Guoqi, *China and the Great War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), ch. 4.

⑤ For example, D. Northrup, *Indentured Labour in the Age of Imperialism 1834–1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) has only one brief reference (page 59) to Chinese workers in World War I France.

⑥ In two recent works on the mobilisation of labour and society during WWI there is virtually no reference at all to indentured Chinese labourers (or indeed to any overseas workers recruited from British and French colonies in Africa, South Asia, and Southeast Asia). See J. Horne, *Labour at War: France and Britain 1914–1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991); and J. Horne (ed.), *State, Society and Mobilization in Europe During the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

sparse, and there is little to compare with the research that has been done, for example, on the role played by black workers and military conscripts from French West Africa during World War I.^① Interestingly, however, an interest has been shown in the Chinese workers amongst French *official* circles in recent years, as part of a larger agenda celebrating the contemporary Chinese ethnic community in France. Thus in November 1988, at a ceremony attended by the French Minister of Transport and Communications representing President Mitterand, a plaque was officially unveiled in Paris (near the Gare de Lyon) to commemorate the contribution of Chinese workers to the allied war effort in 1916–1918.^②

On the Chinese side, although a volume of archival materials (principally from the early Republican Foreign Ministry) on the recruitment of Chinese workers during World War I was published in Taiwan in 1997,^③ only one monograph to date has appeared on the subject in Chinese.^④ There are two reasons for this. Firstly, in post-1949 Chinese communist historiography, the recruitment of Chinese workers in World War I was simply perceived as a minor shameful episode in the longer history of imperialist exploitation of China that dated from the mid-nineteenth century. As such, little interest was shown in the political background to the recruitment or the experiences of the workers themselves. Secondly, the

① See, for example, M. Michel, *L'Appel l'Afrique: Contributions et Reactions l'Effort de Guerre en A. O. F. (1914 – 1919)* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1982). There seems to be a similar lack of French scholarly interest in the experiences of Vietnamese workers in World War I France. One exception is M. Favre, “Un milieu porteur de modernization: travailleurs et tirailleurs vietnamiens en France pendant la première guerre mondiale,” 2 vols. (Doctoral Thesis, Ecole Nationale des Chartres, Paris, 1986).

② The plaque noted that some of these workers settled permanently in France and established “in the neighbourhood of the Gare de Lyon the first Chinese community in France.” This is strictly not true. The first Chinese migrants to France (mostly hawkers and peddlers by trade) arrived at the turn of the century, travelling to Europe via the Trans-Siberian Railroad. Many of them were Zhejiang natives selling carved green soapstone (from the province's Qingtian county) or artificial flowers.

③ Chen Yaling (ed.), *Ouzhan huagong shiliao* (Historical Materials on Chinese Workers in the European War) (Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo, 1997).

④ Chen Sanjing, *Huagong yu ouzhan* (Chinese Workers and the European War) (Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo, 1986).

story of Chinese indentured labour in World War I France has been completely overshadowed by the greater attention paid, especially since the 1980s, to the work-study movement that brought nearly 1,500 Chinese students to France in 1919–1920 to gain work experience and study in French schools and colleges. Since a number of future Chinese Communist party leaders such as Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping were among the participants it is not surprising that the experiences and activities of Chinese *students* in France have attracted the major interest of mainland Chinese historians—a phenomenon that characterizes French scholarship as well to a certain extent.^① Recently, however, with increasing interest amongst Chinese (and western) scholars in China's *global* interactions throughout history, it may be that in the future the story of Chinese indentured labour in World War I France will be the object of serious historical research (a prospect anticipated by the recent international conference on the Chinese Labour Corps hosted by the Weihai Municipal Archives, Shandong, in September 2008).

This article argues, moreover, that the episode should be placed *within significantly larger contexts*. Not only was it an important episode in the longer history of Chinese worker migration that began in the mid-nineteenth century with the illegal “coolie” trade carried out in the treaty ports, but it also illuminates Sino-French mutual perceptions and cultural interaction during the first two decades of the twentieth century. What needs to be emphasized above all else, however, is the extent to which Chinese politicians and intellectuals were *active participants* in the recruitment; they, in effect, invested the project with their *own* political, social and cultural agenda.

It was this aspect that clearly distinguished the World War I recruitment of Chinese labour from the unregulated and illegal “coolie” trade of the nineteenth century, when up to 500,000 Chinese were recruited mainly to work on sugar plantations in Peru, Cuba, and British colonies in South

① A new study of Chinese work-study students in France, for example, makes no reference at all to Chinese workers already in the country. See N. Wang, *Emigration et Politique: Les Etudiants-Ouvriers Chinois en France 1919–1925* (Paris: Les Indes Savantes, 2002).

America (e. g. British Guiana).^① The trade was illegal because the ruling Qing dynasty had officially proscribed emigration in 1712 (reflecting a traditional fear that migrants were potential troublemakers who might participate in rebellion or engage in piracy along China's coastal regions). Yet between 1847 and 1873 (when the trade was formally ended) Chinese indentured labourers were recruited (often forcibly or through deception) by foreign agencies in the treaty ports not subject to Chinese jurisdiction because of extraterritoriality and their Chinese collaborators. The appalling conditions and treatment suffered by these labourers finally convinced the dynasty that strict official supervision of recruitment practices and conditions had to be implemented.^② As early as 1866 (in response to the British and French demand in 1860 that the right of Chinese subjects to emigrate be recognized by the Qing court), the Qing government actually drafted regulations on the recruitment of Chinese indentured labour; these regulations would have limited the term of indenture to five years and guaranteed free passage home after expiry of the contract.^③ Although the British and French governments refused to recognize the validity of these regulations at the time, they served as the basis for both the recruitment of Chinese labour to work in the gold mines of the Transvaal in South Africa

① D. Northrup, *Indentured Labour in the Age of Imperialism 1834—1920*, pp. 25, 37, 38, 61; L. Pan (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of the Chinese Overseas*, pp. 98—99, 248—250, 254. In 1854 Chinese indentured labourers were also recruited for the French Caribbean colonies of Martinique and Guadeloupe. *Centre d'Archives d'Outre-Mer* (Aix-en-Provence), Fonds Ministériels/Généralités; Carton 126, Dossier 1097. Interestingly, a note from the French Foreign Ministry to the Ministry of Marine and Colonies in 1863 suggested recruiting Chinese (and their families) from central Chinese provinces to cultivate cotton and cereals in France's African colonies. *Centre d'Archives d'Outre-Mer*, Fonds Ministériels/Généralités; Carton 130, Dossier 1125.

② It should be pointed out that "coolies" were not mere passive victims of the trade. In 1857 the *Anais*, a ship carrying Chinese indentured labourers to Cuba was discovered wrecked off the coast near Macao. Apparently, the "coolies" had mutinied, killing all officers and seamen on board, and had tried to steer the ship back to the Guangdong coast. After running aground near Macao, the "coolies" all dispersed and returned to their homes. *Centre d'Archives d'Outre-Mer*, Fonds Ministériels/Généralités; Carton 126, Dossier 1097.

③ Yen Ching-hwang, *Coolies and Mandarins: China's Protection of Overseas Chinese During the Late Ch'ing Period 1851—1911* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1985), pp. 32—71, 102—111.

(1904—1906)^① and, especially, for war-related work in France (1916—1918), by which time it was accepted by British and French recruiters that, firstly (in order to guarantee transparency), the text of the indenture had to be published in the Chinese press and had to specify duration, wage rates and the number of working hours; secondly, indentured labourers had the right to free medical assistance and paid passage home after their terms had expired; and, thirdly, Chinese inspectors were to be present at embarkation ports and in France to oversee the labourers' welfare.^② It might also be pointed out that although in the nineteenth century Chinese indentured workers had been contemptuously referred to as *zhuzai* (猪仔, swine, pigs) in official Chinese documents, by the early twentieth century they were referred to as *huagong* (华工, Chinese workers).

Two principal Chinese constituencies were involved in the support for recruitment of Chinese labour in World War I France. The first included government and official elites who responded enthusiastically to the French request for labour in late 1915 (when a delegation from the French War Ministry led by Lieutenant-Colonel Trupitil arrived in China) as a means to join the entente powers and gain admission to a future peace conference. In fact, President Yuan Shikai—in order to forestall Japanese action in China, and particularly Japanese plans to take over Germany's concession area centred on the port of Qingdao—had proposed (without success) China's military participation in the war on the side of the entente powers as soon as the war had begun.^③ On two further occasions, in 1915 and 1917, the Chinese government proposed sending troops to the Darda-

① On the early twentieth century recruitment of Chinese labourers in South Africa, see P. Richardson, *Chinese Mine Labour in the Transvaal* (London: Macmillan, 1982); and Li Anshan, *Feizhou huaqiao huaren shi* (A History of Chinese Overseas in Africa) (Beijing: Zhongguo huaqiao chubanshe, 2000), pp. 106—116, 121—125.

② For the recruitment of Chinese labour in both South Africa and in France contract arrangements also provided for the implementation of an "allotment" system, whereby a portion of the labourers' wages could be used for the support of their families back home.

③ M. Chi, *China Diplomacy 1914—1918*, pp. 20, 72; Lo Hui-min (ed.), *The Correspondence of G. E. Morrison* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 2:559—561.