

REPORT ON THE INVESTIGATION OF THE PEASANT MOVEMENT
IN HUNAN (MARCH 1927)
By Mao Zedong

Introduction

The Chinese Communist Party began in 1921 (with Soviet advice and support) as a Soviet-style Communist Party. It was based in the urban areas and tried to organize the industrial working class to carry out revolutionary activities. From 1922 to 1927, the Communist Party, at the direction of the Soviet Union, was allied with the Guomindang (Nationalist Party) in the "First United Front" in order to help to defeat the warlords and unite China under Guomindang leadership.

As a part of the United Front (and as a card-carrying dual member of both the Communist and Nationalist parties), Mao Zedong (1893-1976) headed up the Guomindang's Peasant Movement Training Institute. In that capacity, he went to visit rural areas in his home province of Hunan in order to investigate the peasant movement there. An excerpt from his report appears below.

Document Excerpts with Questions

From *The Selected Readings of Mao Zedong* (Beijing Foreign Language Press, 1971).

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The Importance of The Peasant Problem

During my recent visit to Hunan I made a first-hand investigation of conditions in the five counties of Hsiantan, Hsianghsiang, Henshan, Liling and Changsha. In the thirty-two days from January 4 to February 5, I called together fact-finding conferences in villages and county towns, which were attended by experienced peasants and by comrades working in the peasant movement, and I listened attentively to their reports and collected a great deal of material. Many of the hows and whys of the peasant movement were the exact opposite of what the gentry in Hankow and Changsha are saying. I saw and heard of many strange things of which I had hitherto been unaware. I believe the same is true of any other places, too. All talk directed against the peasant movement must be speedily set right. All the wrong measures taken by the revolutionary authorities concerning the peasant movement must be speedily changed. Only thus can the future of the revolution be benefited. For the present upsurge of the peasant movement is a colossal event. In a very short time, in China's central, southern and northern provinces, several hundred million peasants will rise like a mighty storm, like a hurricane, a force so swift and violent that no power, however great, will be able to hold it back. They will

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smash all the trammels that bind them and rush forward along the road to liberation. They will sweep all the imperialists, warlords, corrupt officials, local tyrants and evil gentry into their graves. Every revolutionary party and every revolutionary comrade will be put to the test, to be accepted or rejected as they decide. There are three alternatives. To march at their head and lead them. To trail behind them, gesticulating and criticizing. Or to stand in their way and oppose them. Every Chinese is free to choose, but events will force you to make the choice quickly.

Questions:

1. How does Mao characterize the peasants?
2. Reading between the lines, what do you think is the attitude of the Communist Party members to whom Mao is directing his arguments in this report?