



**Mao Tse-tung**  
**THE MAY 4TH MOVEMENT**

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## THE MAY 4TH MOVEMENT<sup>□</sup>

*May 1939*

The May 4th Movement twenty years ago marked a new stage in China's bourgeois-democratic revolution against imperialism and feudalism. The cultural reform movement which grew out of the May 4th Movement was only one of the manifestations of this revolution. With the growth and development of new social forces in that period, a powerful camp made its appearance in the bourgeois democratic revolution, a camp consisting of the working class, the student masses and the new national bourgeoisie. Around the time of the May 4th Movement, hundreds of thousands of students courageously took their place in the van. In these respects the May 4th Movement went a step beyond the Revolution of 1911.

If we trace China's bourgeois-democratic revolution back to its formative period, we see that it has passed through a number of stages in its development: the Opium War, the War of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, the Sino-Japanese War of 1894,<sup>[1]</sup> the Reform Movement of 1898,<sup>[2]</sup> the Yi Ho Tuan Movement,<sup>[3]</sup> the Revolution of 1911, the May 4th Movement, the Northern Expedition, and the War of the Agrarian Revolution. The present War of Resistance Against Japan is yet another stage, and is the greatest, most vigorous and most dynamic stage of all. The bourgeois-democratic revolution can be considered accomplished only when the forces of foreign imperialism and domestic feudalism have basically been overthrown and an independent democratic state has been established. From the Opium War onwards each stage in the development of the revolution has had its own distinguishing characteristics. But the most important feature differentiating them is whether they came before or after the emergence of the Communist Party. However, taken as a whole, all

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\* Comrade Mao Tse-tung wrote this article for newspapers in Yen-an to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the May 4th Movement.

the stages bear the character of a bourgeois-democratic revolution. The aim of this democratic revolution is to establish a social system hitherto unknown in Chinese history, namely, a democratic social system having a feudal society (during the last hundred years a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society) as its precursor and a socialist society as its successor. If anyone asks why a Communist should strive to bring into being first a bourgeois-democratic society and then a socialist society, our answer is: we are following the inevitable course of history.

China's democratic revolution depends on definite social forces for its accomplishment. These social forces are the working class, the peasantry, the intelligentsia and the progressive section of the bourgeoisie, that is, the revolutionary workers, peasants, soldiers, students and intellectuals, and businessmen, with the workers and peasants as the basic revolutionary forces and the workers as the class which leads the revolution. It is impossible to accomplish the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal democratic revolution without these basic revolutionary forces and without the leadership of the working class. Today, the principal enemies of the revolution are the Japanese imperialists and the Chinese traitors, and the fundamental policy in the revolution is the policy of the Anti-Japanese National United Front, consisting of all workers, peasants, soldiers, students and intellectuals, and businessmen who are against Japanese aggression. Final victory in the War of Resistance will be won when this united front is greatly consolidated and developed.

In the Chinese democratic revolutionary movement, it was the intellectuals who were the first to awaken. This was clearly demonstrated both in the Revolution of 1911 and in the May 4th Movement, and in the days of the May 4th Movement the intellectuals were more numerous and more politically conscious than in the days of the Revolution of 1911. But the intellectuals will accomplish nothing if they fail to integrate themselves with the workers and peasants. In the final analysis, the dividing line between revolutionary intellectuals and non-revolutionary or counter-revolutionary intellectuals is whether or not they are willing to integrate themselves with the workers and peasants and actually do so. Ultimately it is this alone, and not professions of faith in the Three People's Principles or in Marxism, that distinguishes one from the other. A true revolutionary must be one who is willing to integrate himself with the workers and peasants and actually does so.

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It is now twenty years since the May 4th Movement and almost two years since the outbreak of the anti-Japanese war. The young people and the cultural circles of the whole country bear a heavy responsibility in the democratic revolution and the War of Resistance. I hope they will understand the character and the motive forces of the Chinese revolution, make their work serve the workers and peasants, go into their midst and become propagandists and organizers among them. Victory will be ours when the entire people arises against Japan. Young people of the whole country, bestir yourselves!

## NOTES

[1] The Sino-Japanese War of 1894 was started by Japanese imperialism for the purpose of invading Korea and China. Many Chinese soldiers and some patriotic generals put up a heroic fight. But China suffered defeat because of the corruption of the Ching government and its failure to prepare resistance. In 1895 the Ching government concluded the shameful Treaty of Shimonoseki with Japan. [p. 237]

[2] For the Reform Movement of 1898 see "[On Protracted War](#)", Note 8, p. of this volume. [p. 237]

[3] The Yi Ho Tuan Movement was the anti-imperialist armed struggle which took place in northern China in 1900. The broad masses of peasants, handicraftsmen and other people took part in this movement. Getting in touch with one another through religious and other channels, they organized themselves on the basis of secret societies and waged a heroic struggle against the joint forces of aggression of the eight imperialist powers -- the United States, Britain, Japan, Germany, Russia, France, Italy and Austria. The movement was put down with indescribable savagery after the joint forces of aggression occupied Tientsin and Peking. [p. 237]

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