



**Mao Tse-tung**

**URGENT TASKS  
FOLLOWING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF  
KUOMINTANG-COMMUNIST  
CO-OPERATION**

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# URGENT TASKS

## FOLLOWING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF KUOMINTANG-COMMUNIST CO-OPERATION

*September 29, 1937*

As far back as 1933, the Chinese Communist Party issued a declaration stating that it was ready to conclude an agreement for resisting Japan with any section of the Kuomintang army on three conditions, namely, that attacks on the Red Army be stopped, that democratic freedoms be granted to the people and that the people be armed. This declaration was made because after the September 18th Incident in 1931, resistance to the Japanese imperialist invasion became the primary task of the Chinese people. But we did not succeed in our objective.

In August 1935, the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese Red Army called upon all political parties and groups and the people throughout the country to organize an anti-Japanese united army and a government of national defence for a common fight against Japanese imperialism.<sup>[1]</sup> In December of that year, the Chinese Communist Party adopted a resolution<sup>[2]</sup> on the formation of an anti-Japanese national united front with the national bourgeoisie. In May 1936, the Red Army published an open telegram<sup>[3]</sup> demanding that the Nanking government stop the civil war and make common cause against Japan. In August of that year, the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party sent a letter<sup>[4]</sup> to the Central Executive Committee of the Kuomintang demanding that the Kuomintang stop the civil war and form a united front of the two parties to fight jointly against Japanese imperialism. In September of the same year, the Communist Party passed a resolution<sup>[5]</sup> on the establishment of a unified democratic republic in China. Besides the declaration, the open telegram, the

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letter and the resolutions, we sent representatives to hold discussions with people from the Kuomintang side on many occasions, and yet all in vain. It was only towards the end of 1936 after the Sian Incident that the plenipotentiary of the Chinese Communist Party and the responsible chief of the Kuomintang reached an agreement on a contemporary issue of vital political importance, namely, cessation of the civil war between the two parties, and brought about the peaceful settlement of the Sian Incident. This was a great

event in Chinese history and provided a prerequisite for the renewal of co-operation between the two parties.

On February 10 this year, the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party sent a telegram<sup>[6]</sup> to the Third Plenary Session of the Kuomintang Central Executive Committee on the eve of its meeting, making comprehensive proposals for concrete co-operation between the two parties. In that telegram we demanded that the Kuomintang give the Communist Party guarantees on the following five points: the ending of the civil war, the realization of democratic freedoms, the convening of a national assembly, speedy preparations for resisting Japan, and improvement of the people's livelihood. At the same time the Communist Party offered guarantees to the Kuomintang on the following four points: the elimination of the state of antagonism between the two regimes, the redesignation of the Red Army, the application of the new-democratic system in the revolutionary base areas, and the discontinuance of the confiscation of the land of the landlords. This was likewise an important political step, for without it the establishment of co-operation between the two parties would have been retarded, which would have been wholly detrimental to speedy preparations for resisting Japan.

Since then the two parties have moved a step closer to each other in their negotiations. The Communist Party has made more specific proposals on the question of a common political programme for the two parties, on the question of lifting the ban on the mass movements and releasing political prisoners, and on the question of redesignating the Red Army. So far the common programme has not yet been promulgated, nor has the ban on the mass movements been lifted, nor has the new system in the revolutionary base areas been recognized; however, about a month after the fall of Peiping and Tientsin an order was issued to the effect that the Red Army was to be redesignated as the Eighth Route Army of the National Revolutionary Army (also called the Eighteenth Group Army in the anti-Japanese battle order).

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The declaration of the Central Committee of our Party on the establishment of bi-partisan co-operation, which had been conveyed to the Kuomintang as early as July 15, and Chiang Kai-shek's statement recognizing the legal status of the Communist Party of China, which should have been published as agreed simultaneously with the declaration, were finally released to the public (alas after a long delay) by the Kuomintang Central News Agency on September 22 and 23 respectively, when the situation at the front had become critical. The Communist Party's declaration and Chiang Kai-shek's statement announced the establishment of co-operation between the two parties and laid the necessary foundation for the great cause of alliance between the two parties to save the nation. The declaration of the Communist Party not only embodies the principle of unity between the two parties but also embodies the basic principle of the great unity of the people throughout the country. It is good that Chiang Kai-shek, in his statement, recognized the legal status of the Communist Party throughout China and spoke of the necessity of unity to save the nation; however, he has not abandoned his Kuomintang arrogance or made any necessary self-criticism, and we can hardly be satisfied with that. Nevertheless, the united front between the two parties has been proclaimed as established. This has ushered in a new epoch in the history of the Chinese revolution. It will exert a widespread and profound influence on the Chinese revolution and play a decisive role in defeating Japanese imperialism.

Ever since 1924, the relationship between the Kuomintang and the Chinese Communist Party has played a decisive role in the Chinese revolution. The revolution of 1924-27 took place as a result of the co-operation of the two parties on the basis of a definite programme. In a mere two or three years, tremendous successes were achieved in the national revolution to which Dr. Sun Yat-sen had devoted forty years and which he had left unaccomplished; these successes were the establishment of the revolutionary base in Kwangtung and the victory of the Northern Expedition. They were the products of the formation of the united front of the two parties. But at the very moment when the revolution was nearing its triumph, some people who failed to uphold the revolutionary cause disrupted the two-party united front and so brought about the failure of the revolution, and the door was left open for foreign aggression. These were the products of the disruption of the united front of the two parties. Now the newly formed united front between the two parties has ushered in a new

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period in the Chinese revolution. There are still people who do not understand the historical role of the united front and its great future and regard it as a mere temporary makeshift devised under the pressure of circumstances; nevertheless, through this united front, the wheel of history will propel the Chinese revolution forward to a completely new stage. Whether China can extricate herself from the national and social crisis which is now so grave depends on how this united front will develop. There is already fresh evidence that the prospects are favourable. First, as soon as the policy of the united front was put forward by the Chinese Communist Party, it won the approval of the people everywhere. This is a clear expression of the will of the people. Second, immediately after the Sian Incident was settled peacefully and the two parties ended the civil war, all political parties and groups, people in all walks of life and all armed forces in the country achieved unprecedented unity. This unity, however, still falls far short of meeting the needs of resisting Japan, especially as the problem of unity between the government and the people remains basically unsolved. Third, and most striking of all, is the fact that the nation-wide War of Resistance has started. We are not satisfied with the War of Resistance in its present state because, though national in character, it is still confined to the government and the armed forces. As we pointed out earlier, Japanese imperialism cannot be defeated through a war of resistance of this kind. Nevertheless, for the first time in a hundred years, China is definitely putting up nation-wide resistance to a foreign invader, and this could never have come about without internal peace and without co-operation between the two parties. If the Japanese aggressors were able to take the four northeastern provinces without firing a single shot during the time when the two-party united front was broken up, then today, when the united front has been re-established, they will not be able to occupy more Chinese territory without paying a price in bloody battles. Fourth, there is the effect abroad. The proposal for the anti-Japanese united front put forward by the Chinese Communist Party has won the support of the workers and peasants and the Communist Parties all over the world. With the establishment of co-operation between the Kuomintang and the Communist Party, the people of various countries, and particularly of the Soviet Union, will help China more actively. China and the Soviet Union have concluded a treaty of non-aggression<sup>[7]</sup> and the relations between the two countries can be expected to improve still further. From all this evidence we can state with certainty that

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the growth of the united front will carry China towards a bright and great future, namely, the defeat of Japanese imperialism and the establishment of a unified democratic republic.

However, the united front cannot accomplish this great task if it remains in its present state. The united front of the two parties must be developed further. For in its present state it is not yet broadly based or consolidated.

Should the Anti-Japanese National United Front be confined to the Kuomintang and the Communist Party? No, it should be a united front of the whole nation, with the two parties forming only a part of it. It should be a united front of all parties and groups, people in all walks of life and all armed forces, a united front of all patriots -- the workers, peasants, soldiers, intellectuals and businessmen. So far, the united front has in fact been confined to the two parties, while the masses of the workers, peasants, soldiers and urban petty bourgeoisie and a large number of other patriots have not yet been aroused, called into action, organized or armed. This is the most serious problem at present. It is serious because it makes victories at the front impossible. It is no longer possible to conceal the critical situation at the front both in northern China and in Kiangsu and Chekiang Provinces, nor is there any need to do so; the question is how to save the situation. And the only way to save it is to put Dr. Sun Yat-sen's Testament into practice, to "arouse the masses of the people". In his deathbed Testament, Dr. Sun declared he was deeply convinced, from the experience accumulated over forty years, that only thus could the goal of revolution be achieved. What reason is there for obstinately refusing to put this testament into practice? What reason is there for failing to do so at a moment when the fate of the nation is at stake? Everybody knows that autocracy and suppression run counter to the principle of "arousing the masses of the people". Resistance by the government and the army alone can never defeat Japanese imperialism. Early in May this year we warned the ruling Kuomintang in all seriousness that unless the masses of the people were aroused to resist, China would follow the same path to disaster as Abyssinia. This point has been made not only by the Chinese Communists but by progressives throughout the country and by many intelligent members of the Kuomintang itself. Yet the policy of autocratic rule remains unchanged. As a result the government has estranged itself from the people, the army from the masses, and the military command from the rank and file. Unless the united front is reinforced by the

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participation of the masses, the crisis on the war fronts will inevitably be aggravated, not mitigated.

The present anti-Japanese united front still lacks a political programme to replace the Kuomintang's policy of autocratic rule, a programme accepted by both parties and formally promulgated. In relation to the masses the Kuomintang is continuing the same practices it has followed for the last ten years; there has been no change and on the whole everything has remained the same for the last ten years, from the government apparatus, the army system and the policy towards civilians to financial, economic and educational policies. Changes there are and very great ones too -- cessation of civil war and unity against Japan. The two parties have ended the civil war and the nation-wide War of Resistance Against Japan has started, which mean a tremendous change in the Chinese political scene since the Sian Incident. But so far there has been no change in the practices enumerated above, and there is thus a disharmony between the things that have

not changed and those that have. The old practices are suited only to compromise abroad and suppression of the revolution at home, and they prove ill-suited in every respect and reveal all their inadequacies when it comes to coping with the Japanese imperialist invasion. It would be another story if we did not want to resist Japan, but since we do and resistance has actually begun, and since a serious crisis has already revealed itself, refusal to change over to new ways will lead to the gravest dangers imaginable. Resistance to Japan requires a broadly based united front, and hence all the people should be mobilized to join it. Resistance to Japan requires a consolidated united front, and this calls for a common programme. The common programme will be the united front's guide to action and will serve also as the tie which, like a cord, closely binds together all the organizations and individuals in the united front, all political parties and groups, people in all walks of life and all armed forces. Only in this way will we be able to speak of firm unity. We are opposed to the old binding rules, because they are unsuited to the national revolutionary war. We look forward to the introduction of new binding rules to replace the old, that is, to the promulgation of a common programme and the establishment of revolutionary order. Nothing else will suit the War of Resistance.

What should the common programme be? It should be the Three People's Principles of Dr. Sun Yat-sen and the Ten-Point Programme for Resisting Japan and Saving the Nation<sup>[8]</sup> proposed by the Communist Party on August 25 this year.

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In its declaration announcing Kuomintang-Communist co-operation, the Chinese Communist Party stated that "the Three People's Principles of Dr. Sun Yat-sen being what China needs today, our Party is ready to fight for their complete realization". Some people find it strange that the Communist Party should be ready to put the Three People's Principles of the Kuomintang into practice; Chu Ching-lai<sup>[9]</sup> of Shanghai, for instance, has expressed doubts in a local periodical. These people think that communism and the Three People's Principles are incompatible. This is a purely formal approach. Communism will be put into practice at a future stage of the development of the revolution; at the present stage the communists harbour no illusions about being able to realize it but will carry out the national and democratic revolution as required by history. This is the basic reason why the Communist Party has proposed an anti-Japanese national united front and a unified democratic republic. As for the Three People's Principles, at the Kuomintang's First National Congress the Communist Party and the Kuomintang jointly decided to put them into practice during the first two-party united front over ten years ago, and they were put into practice from 1924 to 1927 in large areas of the country through the efforts of all loyal Communists and all loyal members of the Kuomintang. Unfortunately that united front broke up in 1927, and in the subsequent ten years the Kuomintang opposed the application of the Three People's Principles. But as far as the Communist Party is concerned, all its policies in these ten years have been fundamentally in line with the revolutionary spirit of Dr Sun's Three People's Principles and Three Great Policies. Not a day has passed without the Communist Party's conducting a struggle against imperialism, which means the thoroughgoing application of the Principle of Nationalism; the worker-peasant democratic dictatorship is nothing but the thoroughgoing application of the Principle of Democracy; the Agrarian Revolution is the thoroughgoing application of the Principle of People's Livelihood. Why, then, has the Communist Party announced the abolition of the worker-peasant democratic dictatorship and the discontinuance of confiscating the land of landlords? The reason, as we explained some time ago, is not that

there is anything at all wrong with these things, but that the Japanese imperialist armed aggression has led to a change in class relations in the country, and has thereby not only made it necessary to unite all classes of the nation against Japanese imperialism, but also created the possibility of doing so. An anti-fascist united front for the sake

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of the common struggle against fascism is both necessary and possible not only in China but throughout the world. Therefore we stand for the establishment of a national and democratic united front in China. It is on these grounds that we have proposed a democratic republic based on the alliance of all classes in place of a worker-peasant democratic dictatorship. The Agrarian Revolution put into effect the principle of "land to the tiller", which is precisely what Dr. Sun Yat-sen proposed. We have now discontinued it for the sake of uniting greater numbers of people against Japanese imperialism, but that does not mean China does not need to solve her land problem. We have unequivocally explained our position on the causes of these changes in policy and their timing. It is precisely because the Chinese Communist Party, basing itself on Marxist principles, has constantly adhered to and developed the revolutionary Three People's Principles -- the common programme of the first Kuomintang-Communist united front -- that, in this hour of national crisis when our country is invaded by a powerful aggressor, the Party has been able to put forward the timely proposal for a national and democratic united front, which is the only policy capable of saving the nation, and to apply this policy with unremitting effort. The question now is not whether it is the Communist Party which believes in or carries out the revolutionary Three People's Principles, but whether it is the Kuomintang which does so. The present task is to restore the revolutionary spirit of Dr. Sun's Three People's Principles throughout the country, and on this basis to work out a definite programme and policy and put them into practice sincerely and not half-heartedly, conscientiously and not perfunctorily, promptly and not tardily; the Chinese Communist Party has been earnestly praying day and night for this to happen. For this very reason, it put forward the Ten-Point Programme for Resisting Japan and Saving the Nation after the Lukouchiao Incident. The Ten-Point Programme is in line both with Marxism and with the genuine revolutionary Three People's Principles. It is an initial programme, the programme for the Chinese revolution at the present stage, which is the stage of the anti-Japanese national revolutionary war; China can be saved only if this programme is put into effect. History will punish those who persist in any course conflicting with this programme.

It is impossible to put this programme into practice throughout the country without the consent of the Kuomintang, because the Kuomintang today is still the biggest party in China and the party in

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power. We believe that the day will come when intelligent members of the Kuomintang will agree to this programme. For if they do not, the Three People's Principles will for ever remain an empty phrase, and it will be impossible to restore the revolutionary spirit of Dr. Sun Yat-sen, impossible to defeat Japanese imperialism and impossible for the Chinese people to escape becoming the slaves of a foreign power. No really intelligent member of the Kuomintang can possibly want this to happen, and our people will never

allow themselves to be turned into slaves. Moreover, in his statement of September 23 Mr. Chiang Kai-shek declared:

I hold that we who stand for the revolution should put aside personal grudges and prejudices and devote ourselves to the realization of the Three People's Principles. At this critical juncture of life and death, we should all the more let bygones be bygones and together with the whole nation make a completely fresh start, and work strenuously for unity in order to preserve the very life and existence of our country.

This is most true. The urgent task at present is to strive for the realization of the Three People's Principles, to discard personal and factional prejudices, to change the old set of practices, to carry out a revolutionary programme in line with the Three People's Principles immediately and to make a completely fresh start together with the whole nation. Today this is the only course. With further delay it will be too late to repent.

But there must be instruments for carrying out the Three People's Principles and the Ten-Point Programme, and this raises the question of reforming the government and the army. The present government is still a one-party dictatorship of the Kuomintang and not a government of the national democratic united front. In the absence of a government of the national democratic united front, it is impossible to carry out the Three People's Principles and the Ten-Point Programme. The present army system of the Kuomintang is still the old one, and it is impossible to defeat Japanese imperialism with troops organized under this system. The troops are now engaged in resistance and we have great admiration and respect for them all, and especially for those fighting at the front. But the lessons of the War of Resistance in the last three months demonstrate that the Kuomintang army system must be changed, as it is unsuited to the task of completely defeating the Japanese aggressors and to the successful application

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of the Three People's Principles and the revolutionary programme. The change should be based on the principles of unity between officers and men and unity between the army and the people. The present army system of the Kuomintang is fundamentally opposed to both these principles. It prevents the mass of officers and men from giving their best despite their loyalty and courage, and therefore an immediate start must be made to reform it. This does not mean that the fighting has to stop until the system is reformed; it can be reformed while the fighting is going on. Here the central task is to bring about a change in the army's political spirit and its political work. The National Revolutionary Army during the Northern Expedition provides an admirable precedent, for in general it did establish unity between officers and men and between the army and the people; a revival of the spirit of those days is absolutely necessary. China should learn from the war in Spain where the Republican army has been built up under extremely adverse circumstances. China is in a better position than Spain, but she lacks a broadly based and consolidated united front, she lacks a united front government capable of carrying out the whole revolutionary programme and large numbers of troops organized according to a new system. She must remedy these defects. With regard to the war as a whole, the Red Army led by the Chinese Communist Party can at present only play a vanguard role, it cannot yet play a decisive role on a national scale. Nevertheless its political, military and organizational merits are well worth acquiring by friendly armies throughout the country. At its inception the Red Army was not what it is today; it, too, has undergone many reforms, the main ones being the weeding out of feudal practices within the army and the application of the principles of unity between officers and men and unity between the army and the people. Friendly armies throughout the country can draw on this experience.



Anti-Japanese comrades of the ruling Kuomintang party! Today we share with you the responsibility for saving the nation from extinction and ensuring its survival. You have already formed an anti-Japanese united front with us. That is very good. You have started resisting Japan. That is also very good. But we do not approve of your continuing your other policies in the old way. We should all develop and broaden the united front and draw in the masses of the people. It is necessary to consolidate the united front and pursue a common programme. It is essential resolutely to reform the political and army systems. It is absolutely necessary to have a new govern-

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ment, which alone can carry out the revolutionary programme and start to reform the armies on a national scale. This proposal of ours answers the needs of the times. Many people in your party also feel that now is the time to put it into practice. Dr. Sun Yat-sen, in his day, made up his mind and reformed the political and army systems, thereby laying the foundation for the revolution of 1924-27. The responsibility for effecting the same kind of reform now falls on your shoulders. We believe that no loyal and patriotic member of the Kuomintang will consider that our proposal is ill-suited to the needs of the situation. We are firmly convinced that it meets the objective needs.

The fate of our nation is at stake -- let the Kuomintang and the Communist Party unite closely! Let all our fellow-countrymen who refuse to become slaves unite closely on the basis of Kuomintang-Communist unity! The urgent task in the Chinese revolution today is to make all the reforms necessary to overcome all difficulties. When this task is accomplished, we can surely defeat Japanese imperialism. If we try hard, our future will be bright.

## NOTES

[1] See "[The Tasks of the Chinese Communist Party in the Period of Resistance to Japan](#)", Note 2, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, Eng. ed., FLP, Peking, 1965, Vol. I, pp. 276-77. [p. 35]

[2] For the resolution see *ibid.*, Note 3, pp. 277-78. [p. 35]

[3] For the open telegram see *ibid.*, Note 4, pp. 279-80. [p. 35]

[4] For the contents of the letter see "[A Statement on Chiang Kai-shek's Statement](#)", Note 7, *ibid.*, pp. 259-61. [p. 35]

[5] For the resolution see "The Tasks of the Chinese Communist Party in the Period of Resistance to Japan", Note 6, *ibid.*, pp. 280-81. [p. 35]

[6] For the telegram see *ibid.*, Note 7, pp. 281-82. [p. 36]

[7] The Treaty of Non-Aggression Between the Republic of China and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was concluded on August 21, 1937. [p. 38]

[8] For the Ten-Point Programme see "[For the Mobilization of All the Nation's Forces for Victory in the War of Resistance](#)", pp. 25-28 of this volume. [p. 40]

[9] Chu Ching-lai was a leader of the National Socialist Party (a small clique organized by reactionary landlords, bureaucrats and big bourgeoisie) who later became a member of the traitorous Wang Ching-wei government. [p. 41]

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