



**Mao Tse-tung**

**WIN THE MASSES IN THEIR MILLIONS FOR  
THE ANTI-JAPANESE NATIONAL UNITED FRONT**

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## WIN THE MASSES IN THEIR MILLIONS FOR THE ANTI-JAPANESE NATIONAL UNITED FRONT<sup>□</sup>

*May 7, 1937*

Comrades! In the course of the discussions of the last few days you have expressed agreement with my report, "The Tasks of the Chinese Communist Party in the Period of Resistance to Japan"; only a few comrades expressed different views. As these dissenting views were rather significant, I shall discuss them first in my concluding speech before dealing with certain other problems.

### THE QUESTION OF PEACE

For nearly two years our Party has fought for internal peace. After the Third Plenary Session of the Kuomintang Central Executive Committee, we declared that peace had been attained, that the stage of "fighting for peace" was over, and that the new task was to "consolidate the peace". We also pointed out that this new task was linked with "fighting for democracy", *i.e.*, consolidating the peace by fighting for democracy. However, some comrades argue that this view of ours is untenable. It follows that they must either arrive at the opposite view or hover between the two. For they argue, "Japan is retreating<sup>□</sup> and Nanking is wavering more than ever; the contradiction between the two countries is becoming weaker and the contradiction within the country is growing sharper." Naturally, according to this appraisal,

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\* This was the concluding speech made by Comrade Mao Tse-tung at the National Conference of the Communist Party of China, held in May 1937.

there is no new stage or new task, and the situation has reverted to its old stage or even deteriorated. I think this view incorrect.

In saying that peace has been attained, we do not mean that it is consolidated; on the contrary, we have said that it is not consolidated. Bringing about peace and consolidating it are two different things. History might reverse its course for a while and peace might meet with setbacks because of the existence of Japanese imperialism, traitors and the pro-Japanese group. But the fact is that peace was attained after the Sian Incident and was the product of several factors (Japan's fundamental policy of invasion, the favourable attitude

of the Soviet Union and also Britain, the United States and France towards internal peace in China, the pressure of the Chinese people, the Communist Party's peace policy during the Sian Incident and its policy for ending the antagonism between the two regimes, the differentiation within the bourgeoisie, the differentiation within the Kuomintang, and so on); peace cannot be made or unmade by Chiang Kai-shek alone. To unmake it, he would have to fight against many forces and draw closer to the Japanese imperialists and the pro-Japanese group. There is no doubt that the Japanese imperialists and the pro-Japanese group are still endeavouring to prolong civil war in China. That is precisely why peace is not yet consolidated. Such being the case, we have come to the conclusion that, instead of reverting to the old slogans of "end the civil war" and "fight for peace", we should take a step forward and adopt the new slogan of "fight for democracy", for this is the only way to consolidate internal peace and bring the war of resistance against Japan into being. Why do we put forward the three closely related slogans of "consolidate the peace", "fight for democracy", and "carry out armed resistance"? The answer is that we desire to push the wheel of revolution forward and that circumstances allow us to do so. Those who deny the new stage and the new task, who deny that the Kuomintang has "begun to change" and by the same logic also deny the achievements of all the forces that have been struggling for peace during the last year and a half will remain where they were before, without advancing an inch.

Why do these comrades make such an unsound appraisal? Because in weighing up the current situation they start not from fundamentals but from a number of limited and transient phenomena (Sato's diplomacy, the Soochow trial,<sup>[2]</sup> the suppression of strikes, the eastward transfer of the Northeastern Army,<sup>[3]</sup> General Yang Hu-cheng's journey

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abroad,<sup>[4]</sup> and so on); hence their dismal picture. We say that the Kuomintang has begun to change and we also say that it has not changed completely. It is inconceivable that the Kuomintang's reactionary policy over the past ten years will completely change without new efforts -- without more and greater efforts -- on our part and on the part of the people. Quite a number of reputedly "Left" people, who often bitterly denounce the Kuomintang and who during the Sian Incident advocated putting Chiang to death and "fighting our way out through Tungkuan",<sup>[5]</sup> are now astonished when events like the Soochow trial occur immediately after peace is attained, and ask, "Why does Chiang Kai-shek still do such things?" They ought to understand that neither the Communists nor Chiang Kai-shek are gods, nor are they isolated individuals, but members of a party or a class. The Communist Party can push the revolution forward by degrees but cannot clear away all the evils in the country overnight. Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang have begun to change, but the accumulated filth of the past ten years will certainly not be rapidly removed without great effort on the part of the whole people. We maintain that the trend is towards peace, democracy and resistance, but this does not imply that the old evils -- civil war, dictatorship and non-resistance -- will be swept away without any effort. It is only through struggle and hard work, and over a long period too, that we can eliminate the old evils, the old filth, and prevent setbacks or even reversals in the revolution.

"They are bent on destroying us." Quite true, they are always trying to destroy us. I fully admit the soundness of this appraisal, and indeed one would have to be fast asleep to overlook the point. But the question is whether there has been any change in the way they

are trying to destroy us. I think there has been. The change is from war and massacre to reform and deceit, from a tough policy to a soft one, from a military to a political policy. Why has there been such a change? Confronted with Japanese imperialism, the bourgeoisie and the Kuomintang are temporarily forced to seek an ally in the proletariat, just as we are seeking an ally in the bourgeoisie. We should take this as our point of departure in considering the question. Internationally, for a similar reason, the French government has changed from hostility towards the Soviet Union to alliance with it.<sup>[6]</sup> Our domestic task has changed from a military to a political one. We for our part have no use for plotting or scheming; our aim is to defeat Japanese imperialism in a common effort by uniting with all

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those members of the bourgeoisie and the Kuomintang who favour resistance.

### THE QUESTION OF DEMOCRACY

"To put the emphasis on democracy is wrong, the emphasis should be solely on resistance to Japan. Without direct action against Japan, there can be no movement for democracy. The majority of the people want only resistance to Japan, not democracy, and what is needed is another December 9th Movement."<sup>[7]</sup>

Let me first put a few questions. Can it be said that what the majority of the people wanted in the previous stage (i.e., from the December 9th Movement of 1935 to the Third Plenary Session of the Kuomintang Central Executive Committee in February 1937) was merely resistance to Japan and not internal peace? Was it wrong to emphasize internal peace then? Was it impossible to have a movement for internal peace without direct action against Japan (the Sian Incident and the Third Plenary Session of the Kuomintang Central Executive Committee took place after the resistance in Suiyuan ended, and today, too, there is as yet nothing equivalent to the Suiyuan resistance or the December 9th Movement)? Everybody knew that in order to resist Japan there had to be internal peace, that without internal peace there could be no resistance to Japan, and that internal peace was a condition for resistance. All the anti-Japanese activities in the previous stage, whether direct or indirect (beginning with the December 9th Movement and ending with the Third Plenary Session of the Kuomintang Central Executive Committee), were centred on the struggle for internal peace which was then the central link, the most essential thing, in the anti-Japanese movement.

Similarly today, in the new stage, democracy is the most essential thing for resistance to Japan, and to work for democracy is to work for resistance to Japan. Resistance and democracy are interdependent, just as are resistance and internal peace, democracy and internal peace. Democracy is the guarantee of resistance, while resistance can provide favourable conditions for developing the movement for democracy.

We hope there may be -- and indeed there will be -- many direct and indirect struggles against Japan in the new stage, and these will

give an impetus to the war of resistance and greatly assist the movement for democracy. But the core and essence of the revolutionary task history has set us is the winning of democracy. Is it, then, wrong to keep stressing democracy? I do not think so.

"Japan is stepping back, Britain and Japan are virtually inclined to strike a balance, and Nanking is wavering more than ever." Ignorance of the laws of historical development has given rise to this needless anxiety. If there were a revolution in Japan and she really withdrew from China, it would help the Chinese revolution and would be just what we want, marking the beginning of the collapse of the world front of aggression. What room for anxiety would there be then? But as a matter of fact, this is not what is happening; Sato's diplomatic moves are preparations for a major war, and a major war confronts us. Britain's policy of wavering can get her nowhere, her clash of interests with Japan making this certain. If Nanking continues to waver for long, it will become the enemy of the whole nation, and its own interests do not allow it to keep on wavering. A temporary retrogression cannot change the general law of history. Hence one should not deny the existence of the new stage or the necessity of setting the task of winning democracy. In any case, moreover, the slogan of democracy is appropriate, because it is obvious to everybody that the Chinese people have far too little democracy, and not too much. Actual events have also shown that to define the new stage, and to set the winning of democracy as our task, is to move a step closer to resistance. Events have moved forward; let us not put the clock back!

"Why do we place so much emphasis on a national assembly?" Because it is something which can affect every aspect of life, because it is the bridge from reactionary dictatorship to democracy, because it is connected with national defence, and because it is a legal institution. To recover eastern Hopei and northern Chahar, to combat smuggling,<sup>[8]</sup> to oppose "economic collaboration",<sup>[9]</sup> etc., as many comrades have proposed, is quite correct, but this complements rather than in any way conflicts with the fight for democracy and a national assembly; the essential thing is still the national assembly and freedom for the people.

It is correct and indisputable that the day-to-day struggle against Japan and the people's struggle for a better life must be linked up with the movement for democracy. Nevertheless, the central and essential thing in the present stage is democracy and freedom.

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## THE QUESTION OF THE FUTURE OF THE REVOLUTION

Some comrades have raised this question, and here I can only give a brief answer.

In the writing of an article the second half can be written only after the first half is finished. Resolute leadership of the democratic revolution is the prerequisite for the victory of socialism. We are fighting for socialism, and in this respect we are different from those who confine themselves to the revolutionary Three People's Principles. It is the great future goal to which our present efforts are directed if we lose sight of the goal,

we cease to be Communists. But equally we cease to be Communists if we relax our efforts of today.

We are exponents of the theory of the transition of the revolution<sup>[10]</sup> and we are for the transition of the democratic revolution in the direction of socialism. The democratic revolution will develop through several stages, all under the slogan of a democratic republic. The change from the predominance of the bourgeoisie to that of the proletariat is a long process of struggle, of struggle for leadership in which success depends on the work of the Communist Party in raising the level of political consciousness and organization both of the proletariat and of the peasantry and urban petty bourgeoisie.

The staunch ally of the proletariat is the peasantry, and next comes the urban petty bourgeoisie. It is the bourgeoisie that will contend with us for leadership.

To overcome the vacillation of the bourgeoisie and its lack of revolutionary thoroughness we must rely on the strength of the masses and on the correctness of our policy, or otherwise the bourgeoisie will come out on top.

A bloodless transition is what we would like and we should strive for it, but what will happen will depend on the strength of the masses.

We are exponents of the theory of the transition of the revolution, and not of the Trotskyite theory of "permanent revolution".<sup>[11]</sup> We are for the attainment of socialism by going through all the necessary stages of the democratic republic. We are opposed to tailism, but we are also opposed to adventurism and impetuosity.

To reject the participation of the bourgeoisie in the revolution on the ground that it can only be temporary and to describe the alliance with anti-Japanese sections of the bourgeoisie (in a semi-colonial country) as capitulation is a Trotskyite approach, with which we cannot agree. Today such an alliance is in fact a necessary bridge on the way to socialism.

## THE QUESTION OF CADRES

A great revolution requires a great party and many first-rate cadres to guide it. In China, with a population of 450 million, it is impossible to carry through our great revolution, which is unprecedented in history, if the leadership consists of a small, narrow group and if the Party leaders and cadres are petty-minded, short-sighted and incompetent. The Chinese Communist Party has been a large party for a long time and it is still large despite the losses during the period of reaction; it has many good leaders and cadres, but still not enough. Our Party organizations must be extended all over the country and we must purposefully train tens of thousands of cadres and hundreds of first-rate leaders. They must be cadres and leaders versed in Marxism-Leninism, politically far-sighted, competent in work, full of the spirit of self-sacrifice, capable of tackling problems on their own, steadfast in the midst of difficulties and loyal and devoted in serving the nation, the class and the Party. It is on these cadres and leaders that the Party relies for its links with the membership and the masses, and it is by relying on their firm leadership of the masses that the Party can succeed in defeating the enemy. Such cadres

and leaders must be free from selfishness, from individualistic heroism, ostentation, sloth, passivity, and sectarian arrogance, and they must be selfless national and class heroes; such are the qualities and the style of work demanded of the members, cadres and leaders of our Party. Such is the spiritual legacy handed down to us by the tens of thousands of members, the thousands of cadres, and the scores of first-rate leaders who have laid down their lives for the cause. Beyond any doubt, we ought to acquire these qualities, do still better in remoulding ourselves and raise ourselves to a higher revolutionary level. But even this is not enough; we must also regard it as our duty to discover many more new cadres and leaders in the Party and the country. Our revolution depends on cadres. As Stalin said, "Cadres decide everything." [\[12\]](#)

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## THE QUESTION OF DEMOCRACY WITHIN THE PARTY

To attain this aim, inner-Party democracy is essential. If we are to make the Party strong, we must practise democratic centralism to stimulate the initiative of the whole membership. There was more centralism during the period of reaction and civil war. In the new period, centralism should be closely linked with democracy. Let us apply democracy, and so give scope to initiative throughout the Party. Let us give scope to the initiative of the whole Party membership and so train new cadres in great numbers, eliminate the remnants of sectarianism, and unite the whole Party as solidly as steel.

## UNITY IN THE CONFERENCE AND IN THE WHOLE PARTY

After explanation, the dissenting views on political issues voiced at this conference have given way to agreement, and the earlier difference between the line of the Central Committee and the line of retreat adopted under the leadership of certain comrades, has also been settled; [\[13\]](#) this shows that our Party is very solidly united. This unity provides the most important basis for the present national and democratic revolution, because it is only through the unity of the Communist Party that the unity of the whole class and the whole nation can be achieved, and it is only through the unity of the whole class and the whole nation that the enemy can be defeated and the national and democratic revolution accomplished.

## WIN THE MASSES IN THEIR MILLIONS FOR THE ANTI-JAPANESE NATIONAL UNITED FRONT

The aim of our correct political policy and of our solid unity is to win the masses in their millions for the anti-Japanese national united front. The broad masses of the proletariat, the peasantry and the urban petty bourgeoisie need our work of propaganda, agitation and organization. Further efforts on our part are also needed to establish

an alliance with those sections of the bourgeoisie which are opposed to Japan. To make the policy of the Party the policy of the masses requires effort, long and persistent effort, unrelenting and strenuous, patient and painstaking effort. Without such effort, we shall achieve nothing. The formation and consolidation of the anti-Japanese national united front, the accomplishment of the task incumbent on it and the establishment of a democratic republic in China are absolutely inseparable from our effort to win over the masses. If we succeed in bringing millions upon millions of the masses under our leadership by such effort, our revolutionary task can be speedily fulfilled. By our exertions we shall surely overthrow Japanese imperialism and attain complete national and social liberation.

## NOTES

[1] The Japanese imperialists made temporary conciliatory gestures after the Sian Incident in order to induce the Kuomintang authorities to disrupt the internal peace which was being restored and to break up the anti-Japanese national united front which was taking shape. They arranged for the bogus autonomous government of Inner Mongolia under their control to release two messages, one in December 1936 and another in March 1937, pledging allegiance to the Kuomintang government in Nanking. And the Japanese foreign minister, Sato himself, publicly wooed Chiang Kai-shek, slyly declaring that Japan would improve its relations with China and help China achieve political unification and economic recovery. Furthermore, Japan sent a so-called Economic Study Group, headed by Kenji Kodama, a Japanese financial magnate, ostensibly to help China "complete the organization of a modern state" These were schemes for aggression and were known as "Sato's diplomacy"; they were called a "retreat on the part of Japan" by those people who were deluded by the Japanese imperialist make-believe. [p.285]

[2] In April 1937, the Kuomintang High Court in Soochow tried Shen Chun-ju and six other leaders of the Resist Japan and Save the Nation Movement who had been arrested in November 1936 in Shanghai. The charge was "endangering the Republic", the usual trumped-up indictment the reactionary Kuomintang authorities used to stigmatize all patriotic movements. [p.286]

[3] Prior to the Sian Incident, the Northeastern Army was stationed on the border between Shensi and Kansu Provinces and was in direct contact with the Red Army in northern Shensi. Greatly influenced by the Red Army, it subsequently staged the *coup* in Sian In March 1937, the Northeastern Army was forced to go east to Honan and Anhwei Provinces, a move taken by the Kuomintang reactionaries to cut it off from contact with the Red Army and at the same time to sow discord in its ranks. [p.286]

[4] General Yang Hu-cheng was a military leader in China's Northwest who staged the Sian Incident together with Chang Hsueh-liang. Thus the prime movers

in this incident were popularly linked together in the double-barreled surname "Chang-Yang". When Chiang Kai-shek was released, Chang accompanied him to Nanking but was immediately placed under detention. In April 1937 Yang, too, was ousted from his post by the Kuomintang reactionaries and had to take leave of absence abroad. When the War of Resistance began, Yang returned to China to offer his services, only to be interned by Chiang Kai-shek for the rest of his life In September 1949, when the People's Liberation Army was driving forward near Chungking, the Kuomintang had him murdered in a concentration camp. [p.286]

<sup>[5]</sup> Tungkuan is a strategically important gateway on the borders of Shensi, Honan and Shansi. At the time of the Sian Incident the Kuomintang troops were mainly quartered east of it. Certain reputedly "Left" people in the Party, like Chang Kuo-tao, then urged that the Red Army should "fight its way out through Tung kuan", which meant that the Red Army should mount an offensive against the Kuomintang troops. This proposal ran counter to the Central Committee's policy for a peaceful settlement of the Sian Incident. [p.287]

<sup>[6]</sup> For a long time after the October Revolution, the French imperialists pursued a hostile policy towards the Soviet Union. From 1918 to 1920, the French government took an active part in the armed intervention by 14 powers against the Soviet Union and continued its reactionary policy of isolating the Soviet Union even after the intervention failed. It was not until May 1935 that, under the influence of the Soviet Union's peace policy among the French people and because of the German fascist menace, France concluded a treaty of mutual assistance with the Soviet Union, though her reactionary government failed to observe it. [p.287]

<sup>[7]</sup> The students' patriotic demonstration in Peking on December 9, 1935, led by the Chinese Communist Party. The movement called for the cessation of civil war and armed resistance to Japan and won nation-wide support. [p.288]

<sup>[8]</sup> The smuggling of Japanese goods into China. [p.289]

<sup>[9]</sup> This refers to the self-styled Sino-Japanese economic collaboration. [p.289]

<sup>[10]</sup> See Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, Part IV; V. I. Lenin, *Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution*, Part [XII](#) and Part [XIII](#); *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks), Short Course*, Chapter 3, Section 3. [p.290]

<sup>[11]</sup> See J. V. Stalin, "The Foundations of Leninism", Part III; "The October Revolution and the Tactics of the Russian Communists", Part II; "Concerning Questions of Leninism", Part III. [p.290]

<sup>[12]</sup> See J. V. Stalin, "Address Delivered in the Kremlin Palace to the Graduates from the Red Army Academies" in May 1935, in which he said: ". . . of all the valuable capital the world possesses, the most valuable and most decisive is people, cadres. It must be realized that under our present conditions 'cadres decide everything.'" [p.291]

<sup>[13]</sup> This difference was between the line of the Party's Central Committee and Chang Kuo-tao's line of retreat in 1935-36. See "On Tactics Against Japanese Imperialism", Note 22, pp. 175-76 of this volume. In stating that the earlier difference . . . has . . . been settled", Comrade Mao Tse-tung was referring to the fact that the Fourth Front Army of the Red Army had joined forces with the Central Red Army. Chang Kuo-tao's subsequent open betrayal of the Party and his degeneration into a counter-revolutionary was the act of an individual traitor and no longer a question of differences over Party line. [p.292]

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