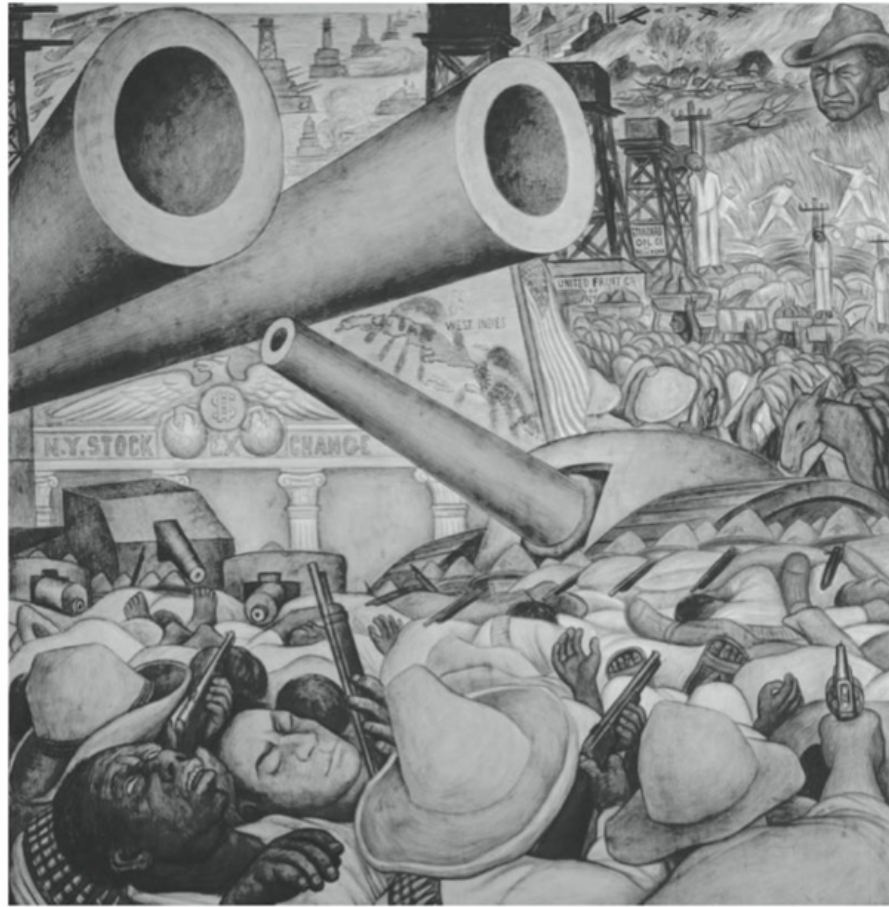


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Diego Rivera, Imperialism

Diego Rivera, "Portrait of America, Imperialism," Peter A. Jolly & Son Collection, Smithsonian American Art Museum [contact: J2010.15]

Another great Mexican muralist, Diego Rivera (1886–1957), also achieved fame from his paintings in Mexico City in the 1920s and then traveled to the United States, where he was commissioned to paint murals for the San Francisco Stock Exchange, the Detroit Institute of Art, and Rockefeller Center in New York City. The latter work was destroyed after it was discovered that Rivera, a dedicated Marxist, had included in it a portrait of the Russian revolutionary, Vladimir Lenin.

After the Rockefeller Center controversy, Rivera completed a series of 21 paintings depicting U.S. history collectively known as *Portrait of America*.

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Accepting no fee, Rivera painted these murals for an old, ramshackle building rented by the Communist Party Opposition, an anti-Stalinist organization founded in 1929. Used as a lecture hall and study center, the space was known as the New Workers' School. The thirteenth painting, *Imperialism*, shown on page 455, is dominated by the guns of U.S. tanks and warships protruding from the portal of the New York Stock Exchange. In the forefront is a mass of Latin American rebels, in whose midst are seen a murdered Caribbean black and a Cuban revolutionary. In the upper right appears the figure of Augusto Sandino, the leader of a rebellion against the U.S. military presence in Nicaragua, who had just been assassinated on orders of the Nicaraguan government. He looks down on the operations of Standard Oil and United Fruit, two U.S. organizations heavily involved in Latin America.

Only black-and-white photographs of *Imperialism* remain. When the school closed, the murals (which had been painted on larger moveable wooden panels) were given to the New York chapter of the International Ladies Garment Workers' Union, which stored them in its recreation center in Forest Park, Pennsylvania. A fire in 1969 destroyed all the paintings but three, which are now in private collections.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. In Orozco's painting, what message is the painter communicating about the crumbling churches, the abandoned factories, the business owners, and the army officers?
2. What message does Orozco convey about the character and qualities of the central figure, the peasant?
3. What does Rivera's painting imply about the character, motives, and impact of U.S. imperialism?
4. In what specific ways do the paintings reveal the Marxist sympathies of the two Mexican painters?
5. What is the overall message of the two paintings? Is it optimistic about Latin America's prospects?

Economic Nationalism in Mexico

100 • LÁZARO CÁRDENAS, SPEECH TO THE NATION

Following the overthrow of dictator Porfirio Díaz in 1911, in 1917 Mexican revolutionaries overcame their rivalries and drafted a new constitution that confirmed the principles of free speech, religious toleration, universal suffrage, the separation of powers, and the protection of private property. It also committed the government to social reform and greater control over foreign corporations. In the face of continuing conflict, however, these latter provisions remained a dead letter until the presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas, from 1934 to 1940. In a series of bold steps,

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he confiscated millions of acres of land from large estates for redistribution to peasants, introduced free and compulsory elementary education, and sponsored legislation to provide medical and unemployment insurance. His most audacious step, however, was the nationalization of Mexico's oil industry. In 1936, a dispute between Mexican labor unions and U.S. and British oil companies erupted into a strike, and in the ensuing legal battle, 17 oil companies refused to accept the pro-union ruling of an arbitration board appointed by Cárdenas, even after the Mexican Supreme Court upheld the decision. In response, Cárdenas ordered government seizure of the oil companies' property. Cárdenas announced his decision on March 18, 1938, in a radio speech to the nation. In the following excerpt, Cárdenas comments on the role of the oil companies in Mexico's economic and social development.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. In the account of Cárdenas, which actions by the foreign oil companies forced him to nationalize the oil industry?
2. According to Cárdenas, what truth is there in the oil companies' claims that they have benefited Mexico?
3. According to Cárdenas, who is ultimately responsible for the actions of the oil companies?
4. Which political activities of the oil companies does Cárdenas condemn?
5. What hardships does Cárdenas anticipate for the Mexican people as a result of his decision?
6. In what ways is Cárdenas's speech an appeal to Mexican nationalism?

In each and every one of the various attempts of the Executive to arrive at a final solution of the conflict within conciliatory limits . . . the intransigence of the [oil] companies was clearly demonstrated. Their attitude was therefore premeditated and their position deliberately taken, so that the Government, in defense of its own dignity, had to resort to application of the Expropriation Act, as there were no means less drastic or decision less severe that might bring about a solution of the problem. . . .

It has been repeated *ad nauseam* that the oil industry has brought additional capital for the development and progress of the country. This assertion is an exaggeration. For many years throughout the

major period of their existence, oil companies have enjoyed great privileges for development and expansion, including customs and tax exemptions and innumerable prerogatives; it is these factors of special privilege, together with the prodigious productivity of the oil deposits granted them by the Nation often against public will and law, that represent almost the total amount of this so-called capital.

Potential wealth of the Nation; miserably underpaid native labor; tax exemptions; economic privileges; governmental tolerance—these are the factors of the boom of the Mexican oil industry.

Let us now examine the social contributions of the companies. In how many of the villages

Source: Benjamin Keen, ed. and trans. *Readings in Latin American Civilization* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1955), pp. 362–364.

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bordering on the oil fields is there a hospital, or school or social center, or a sanitary water supply, or an athletic field, or even an electric plant fed by the millions of cubic meters of natural gas allowed to go to waste?

What center of oil production, on the other hand, does not have its company police force for the protection of private, selfish, and often illegal interests? These organizations . . . are charged with innumerable outrages, abuses, and murders, always on behalf of the companies that employ them.

Who is not aware of the irritating discrimination governing construction of the company camps? Comfort for the foreign personnel; misery, drabness, and insubricity for the Mexicans. Refrigeration and protection against tropical insects for the former; indifference and neglect, medical service and supplies always grudgingly provided, for the latter; lower wages and harder, more exhausting labor for our people.

The tolerance which the companies have abused was born, it is true, in the shadow of the ignorance, betrayals, and weakness of the country's rulers; but the mechanism was set in motion by investors lacking in the necessary moral resources to give something in exchange for the wealth they have been exploiting.

Another inevitable consequence of the presence of the oil companies . . . has been their persistent and improper intervention in national affairs. The oil companies' support to strong rebel factions against the constituted government . . . during the years 1917 to 1920 is no longer a matter for discussion by anyone. Nor is anyone ignorant of the fact that in later periods and even at the present time, the oil companies have almost openly encouraged the ambitions of elements discontented with the country's government, every time their interests were affected either by taxation or by the modification of their privileges or the withdrawal

of the customary tolerance. They have had money, arms, and munitions for rebellion, money for the anti-patriotic press which defends them, money with which to enrich their unconditional defenders. But for the progress of the country, for establishing an economic equilibrium with their workers through a just compensation of labor, for maintaining hygienic conditions in the districts where they themselves operate, or for conserving the vast riches of the natural petroleum gases from destruction, they have neither money, nor financial capabilities, nor the desire to subtract the necessary funds from the volume of their profits.

Nor is there money with which to meet a responsibility imposed upon them by judicial verdict, for they rely on their pride and their economic power to shield them from the dignity and sovereignty of a Nation which has generously placed in their hands its vast natural resources and now finds itself unable to obtain the satisfaction of the most elementary obligations by ordinary legal means.

As a logical consequence of this brief analysis, it was therefore necessary to adopt a definite and legal measure to end this permanent state of affairs in which the country sees its industrial progress held back by those who hold in their hands the power to erect obstacles as well as the motive power of all activity and who . . . abuse their economic strength to the point of jeopardizing the very life of a Nation endeavoring to bring about the elevation of its people through its own laws, its own resources, and the free management of its own destinies.

With the only solution to this problem thus placed before it, I ask the entire Nation for moral and material support sufficient to carry out so justified, important, and indispensable a decision. . . .

And, finally, as the fear may arise among the interests now in bitter conflict in the field of international affairs¹ that a deviation of raw materials fundamentally necessary to the struggle in which

¹World War II in Europe was still more than a year away, but the Japanese invasion of China was in full swing, Spain was in the midst of its civil war, and Hitler had just annexed Austria.

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the most powerful nations are engaged might result from the consummation of this act of national sovereignty and dignity, we wish to state that our petroleum operations will not depart a single inch from the moral solidarity maintained by Mexico with the democratic nations, whom we wish to

assure that the expropriation now decreed has as its only purpose the elimination of obstacles erected by groups who do not understand the evolutionary needs of all peoples and who would themselves have no compunction in selling Mexican oil to the highest bidder. . . .

China in an Era of Political Disintegration and Revolution

The overthrow of the Qing Dynasty in the revolution of 1911 failed to produce China's long-awaited national revival. In the aftermath of the revolution, Sun Yat-sen and his dreams of democracy were pushed aside by General Yuan Shikai, who ruled the Chinese "republic" as a dictator between 1912 and 1916 and was planning to have himself declared emperor when he died in 1916. After his death, China was carved up by dozens of generally unscrupulous and irresponsible warlords—military strongmen whose local authority was based on their control of private armies and whose grip on China was not completely broken until after the Communists took power in 1949. With a weak national government, the Chinese endured continued Western domination of their coastal cities and were able to offer only feeble resistance when the Japanese conquered Manchuria in 1931 and invaded China itself in 1937. Massive flooding of the Yellow River and widespread famine in north China in the 1920s deepened the people's misery.

With Confucian certainties shattered and China disintegrating, intellectuals intensely debated China's predicament. The 1920s were years of intellectual experiment and inquiry, in which members of study groups, journalists, poets, fiction writers, academics, and students scrutinized what it meant to be Chinese and debated the country's future. Most of these intellectuals rejected traditional Chinese values, customs, and education, arguing that only a sharp break from the past would enable China to stand up to Japan and the West. Most of them believed that China needed to model itself on the West, although what specific Western values and institutions should be borrowed was a matter of debate.

In politics, two revolutionary parties—the Nationalist Party, or Guomindang, and the Chinese Communist Party—competed for support. The Guomindang, led by Sun Yat-sen until his death in 1925, was theoretically dedicated to Sun's "three principles of the people": democracy, nationalism, and livelihood. The party came to be identified with the educated, Western-oriented bourgeoisie of China's coastal cities and in practice, under General Chiang Kai-shek (1887–1975), concentrated less on social reform and democracy than on fighting warlords and Communists. The Chinese Communist Party, founded in 1921, was dedicated to Marxism-Leninism,

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with its leadership provided by intellectuals and its major support eventually coming from China's rural masses.

Aided by agents of the Soviet Union, the Guomindang and the Communists formed a coalition in 1923 to destroy the warlords. Their combined forces launched the Northern Expedition against the warlords in 1926, but the alliance disintegrated in 1927 when Chiang Kai-shek, buoyed by his early victories and generous financial support from Chinese businessmen, purged the Communists from the army and ordered Guomindang troops in Shanghai to kill Communist leaders who had gathered there. Communist troops and their leaders fled to the countryside, where, under the leadership of Mao Zedong (1893–1976), they rebuilt the party into a formidable military and political force. After a long struggle against the Guomindang and the Japanese, the Communists gained control of China in 1949.

Chinese Nationalism and the May 4th Movement

101 • DENG YINGCHAO, THE SPIRIT OF THE MAY 4TH MOVEMENT

On May 4, 1919, word reached Beijing that the diplomats at the Paris Peace Conference had rejected Chinese demands that the prewar German concessions in Shandong province be returned to Chinese control; instead, they were to be retained by Japan. Incensed by this rebuff from the Western powers, which had welcomed China as an ally in World War I, and resentful of Japan for taking one more piece of Chinese territory, university students in Beijing erupted in anger. Three thousand of them descended on Tiananmen Square, where they shouted slogans, waved banners, attacked a pro-Japanese official, and burned the house of a cabinet minister. The movement spread to universities, and with support from journalists, merchants, and well-known politicians such as Sun Yat-sen, students organized a national boycott of Japanese goods. After the Beijing warlord government attempted to crack down by arresting some 1,500 students in Beijing, the movement gained even more support, with whole factories going on strike and students refusing to attend classes. In response, the arrested Beijing students were released, the cabinet fell, and China refused to sign the Versailles Treaty.

This was more than a one-time victory for China's students. The "May 4th incident" became a national movement, one that made nationalism a part of China's political landscape.

Deng Yingchao was a 16-year-old student at a women's teachers' college in Tianjin when the May 4th demonstrations in Beijing spread to her university. The experience changed her life. Not only did she become a political activist, but she also met her future husband, Zhou Enlai, who served as China's premier and foreign minister after the Communist revolution. She joined the Communist Party in 1924 and was one of the few women who was part of the Long March, the 6,000-mile trek of

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Mao Zedong's followers from Jiangxi province to Shaanxi in 1934–1935. After the Communist victory in 1949, she was revered as the nation's "elder sister" and became a member of the party's Central Committee. She weathered numerous political storms and died in Beijing at age 88.

The following excerpt is from an article written by Deng in 1949 in commemoration of the events of May 4, 1919. It captures the hopeful enthusiasm of the young participants in the May 4th movement and conveys the broad significance of the events.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. What does Deng Yingchao's article reveal about the level of enthusiasm among the student protesters? What does it tell us about the students' goals?
2. Aside from the immediate impact of the demonstrations in Beijing, what were the deeper causes of the student protests, according to Deng?
3. What can be gathered from Deng's article about the level of public support for the student protesters in Tianjin?
4. According to Deng, what was the long-term significance of the May 4th movement?
5. Writing from the perspective of 1949, Deng suggests that the Communist movement in China can be traced back to the May 4th movement. To what degree does her recounting of events affirm such an interpretation?

On May 4, 1919, students in Beijing held a demonstration asking the government to refuse to sign the Versailles Peace Treaty and to punish the traitors at home. . . . The following day, when the news reached Tianjin, it aroused the indignation of students there who staged their own demonstrations of May 7th. They then started organizing such patriotic societies as the Tianjin Students Union, the Tianjin Women's Patriotic Society, and the Tianjin Association of National Salvation. We had no political theory to guide us at that time, only our strong patriotic enthusiasm. In addition to the Beijing students' demands, we demanded "Abolish the Twenty-one Demands!"¹ "Boycott Japanese Goods!" "Buy Chinese-Made Goods!" Furthermore, we emphatically refused to become slaves to foreign powers!

Despite the fact that it was a patriotic students' demonstration, the Northern Warlord government resorted to force to quell the protest. The police dispersed the march with rifles fixed with bayonets and sprayed us with hoses; and later resorted to rifle butts and even arrests. However, our political awareness awakened a new spirit in us in our new struggle with the government. New European ideas and culture poured into China after World War I. Also the success of the 1917 October Revolution in Russia brought progressive Marxism-Leninism to China. . . .

What we did know intuitively was that alone, we students did not have enough strength to save China from foreign powers. Therefore, we knew that we "must awaken all our compatriots."

Source: Deng Yingchao, "The Spirit of the May 4 Movement," in *Women of China*, May 1989, pp. 40–42.

¹The Twenty-One Demands, presented to China by Japan in 1915, required China to confirm Japan's claim to the former German concessions in Shandong and various economic

concessions in Manchuria and Mongolia. They also demanded extensive Japanese rights in China itself, including the appointment of Japanese advisors to the Chinese government.

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We therefore organized many speakers' committees to spread propaganda among the people. I became the head of the speakers' group in the Tianjin Women's Patriotic Society and in the Tianjin Students Union. Frequently we gave speeches outside the campus. At first, we women dared not to give speeches on the street due to the feudalistic tradition that existed in China then. So the female students went instead to the places where people gathered either for an exhibition or to see a show, while the male students gave speeches in the street to passersby. There were always a lot of listeners. We told them why we should be united to save our country; that traitors in the government must be punished; and that people should have the right to freedom of assembly and association. We talked about the suffering of the Korean people after their country was conquered; and we publicly lodged our protests against the Northern Warlord government that persecutes progressive students. Usually tears streamed down our cheeks when we gave our speeches and our listeners were often visibly moved.

In addition to making speeches we also made home visits to out-of-the-way places or to slum areas. We went door-to-door to give our pleas, and some families gave us a warm welcome, but others just slammed the door on us. However, nothing could discourage us.

We delivered handbills and published newspapers to spread our patriotic enthusiasm even further. *The Paper of the Students Union*, for example, was run by the Tianjin Students Union and each issue sold more than 20,000 copies—a considerable number at that time! It was originally published every three days; however, later it was expanded into a daily newspaper. . . .

The Women's Patriotic Society also published a weekly. Both papers reported foreign and national current events, students' movements across the country, student editorials, progressive articles, and cultural and art news.

The reactionary Northern Warlord government, however, turned a deaf ear to us. They ultimately bowed to Japanese powers, shielded the traitors, and tried to suppress the students' movement. At that time people were denied expressing their patriotic views. So what we then struggled most urgently for was freedom of assembly and association; the right to express one's political views; and for freedom of the press. United under this common goal, we struggled bravely.

> After describing the numerous clashes between students and university and governmental authorities in 1919 and 1920, Deng comments on the broad significance of the May 4th movement.

The women's liberation movement was greatly enhanced by the May 4th Movement; this became an important part of the movement. And slogans such as "sexual equality," "freedom of marriage," "co-educational universities," "social contacts for women," and "job opportunity for women," were put forward.

In Tianjin we merged the men's students union with the women's. Fearing ridicule and that public opinion would be against it, some of the women were hesitant at first. However, the male and female activists among us took the lead and we worked together bravely to overcome all obstacles. In our work, we were equal and we respected each other. . . . Women students, particularly the more progressive ones, worked especially hard for we knew we were pioneers among Chinese women to show that women are not inferior to men. Inspired by the new ideals, among the progressive students men broke with the tradition of sexual discrimination and treated us with respect. . . .

At this time cultural movements were developing rapidly and students were receptive to publications which promoted new ideas. In Beijing, for example, there were *New Youth*, *Young China*,

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and *New Tide* magazines. In Tianjin, the Students Union every week would invite a progressive professor . . . to give us an academic lecture on new literary ideas such as how to write in vernacular Chinese rather than in classical stereotyped writings.

Today these things are commonplace, but then it was very new and important.

As more scientific subjects and new ideas poured into China, we felt an urgency to learn, discuss, study, and understand them. Thus by the end of that summer, a smaller and well-organized group—the Awakening Society—was established by 20 of the more progressive activists among us students. . . .

At that time we didn't have a definite political conviction, nor did we know much about Communism. We just had a vague idea that the principle of distribution in the most advantageous society was "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs." We knew only that a revolution led by Lenin in Russia had been successful; and that the aim of that revolution was to emancipate the majority of the people who were oppressed, and to establish a classless society.

How we did long for such a society! But at that time we could not learn about such a society because we could scarcely find any copy of Lenin's ideas or information about the October Revolution.

The Maoist Version of Marxism

102 • MAO ZEDONG, REPORT ON AN INVESTIGATION OF THE PEASANT MOVEMENT IN HUNAN AND STRATEGIC PROBLEMS OF CHINA'S REVOLUTIONARY WAR

Mao Zedong, born into a well-to-do peasant family in Hunan province in 1893, was a university student when he participated in the anti-Qing revolution of 1911. During the next several years, while serving as a library assistant at Beijing University, he embraced Marxism and helped organize the Chinese Communist Party, which was officially founded in 1921. During the 1920s he developed his unique Chinese variant of Marxism, which was based on the premise that peasants, not the urban proletariat, would lead China to socialism.

After the break from the Guomindang in 1927, the Communists took their small army to the remote and hilly region on the Hunan–Jiangxi border, where in 1931 they proclaimed the Chinese Soviet Republic. In 1934, Chiang Kai-shek's troops surrounded the Communists' forces, but as they moved in for the kill, more than 100,000 Communist troops and officials broke their encirclement and embarked on the Long March. This legendary trek lasted more than a year and covered 6,000 miles before a remnant found safety in the remote mountains around Yan'an in northern Shaanxi province. It was here that Mao, now the party's leader, rebuilt his army and readied himself and his followers for what would be 14 more years of struggle against the Japanese and the Guomindang.

The following excerpts are drawn from two of Mao's most important writings. The first, his "Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan," was written in 1927 after he visited Hunan province to study the activities and accomplishments of peasant associations, groups of peasants who, with the help of Communist organizers, had seized land, humiliated or killed landlords, and taken

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control of their communities. In it, Mao seeks to convince other party members that the peasants are the main source of revolution in China. The second excerpt, from his "Strategic Problems of China's Revolutionary War," is based on a series of lectures delivered at the Red Army College in late 1936. In it, Mao assesses China's military situation and outlines his strategy for victory over the Guomindang through guerrilla warfare.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. What specific developments in Hunan province reinforced Mao's convictions about the peasantry as a revolutionary force?
2. What criticisms have been made of the Hunan peasant movement, and how does Mao attempt to counter these criticisms?
3. What can be learned from these two writings about Mao's views of the role of the Communist Party in China's revolutionary struggle?
4. According to Mao, what have been the sources of oppression of the Chinese people? Once these sources of oppression are removed, what will China look like?
5. According to Mao, what are the four unique characteristics of China's revolutionary war, and how do they affect Mao's military strategy?
6. What are the characteristics of Mao's "active defense" as opposed to "passive defense"?
7. How do Mao's ideas about revolution resemble and differ from those of Marx?

Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan [1927]

. . . 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 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. . . .

"Yes, peasant associations are necessary, but they are going rather too far." This is the opinion of the middle-of-the-roads. But what is the actual situation? True, the peasants are in a sense "unruly" in the countryside. Supreme in authority, the peasant association allows the landlord no say and sweeps away his prestige. This amounts to striking the landlord down to the dust and keeping him

Source: Mao Zedong, *Selected Works* (New York: International Publishers, 1954). Reprinted by permission.